

# **Discourse and Identity: A Study of Women in Prison in Ireland**

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**Discourse and Identity: A Study of Women in Prison in  
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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Ph.D. is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed  (Candidate)  
ID No.:99145901 Date: 8-2-2006

**In memory of my father,  
Tom Quinlan.**

I would like to thank all of the people who supported and encouraged me in this research.

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## Abstract

This dissertation deals with the question of whether women prisoners' identities are completely subjugated by the prison or whether they are able to resist identity-subjugation. My thesis is that, although women prisoners are subjugated as *prisoners*, they have developed ways of resisting subjugation as *women*. This study is based on a critical ethnography of women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland in both a historical and contemporary context.

Methodologically the study is informed by feminist epistemology, discourse analysis, and semiotics. The aim of the research was to explore the social and spatial experiences of imprisonment. The historical data is taken from published and archived memoirs, historiographies, prison records and reports. The contemporary data is based on a quantitative profile of women currently in prison, the crimes for which they are imprisoned and the sentence imposed upon them. I also conducted a series of qualitative in-depth interviews with 83 imprisoned women. During these interviews I photographed the women's personal prison spaces. Using a series of photo-elicitation interviews, I examined with the women the meanings of their personal prison spaces and the meanings of the artefacts which they displayed within those spaces. In addition, I interviewed thirty people involved with and working in the prisons; conducted a content and semiotic analysis of print media representations of women's prisoners in a range of newspapers; and undertook an examination of the structures of the women's prisons.

The analysis of the research material reveals a comprehensive profile of women prisoner's experiences in the Irish prison system. The meaning, effect and implications of their experiences are established. The main conclusions centre on the manner in which these prison experiences shape their identities, subjectivities, and senses of self.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

In the contemporary debate as to whether women prisoners' identities are completely subjugated by the prison or whether women prisoners are able to resist identity-subjugation, analyses of the present-day experiences of women prisoners in Ireland suggests that, although women prisoners are subjugated as *prisoners*, they have developed ways to resist subjugation as *women*.

This thesis is a study of women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland. It follows the research of those who have studied women's experiences of imprisonment, a few in Ireland, many internationally. Their accounts have established that women generally commit little crime in society; that women constitute a minority of prison populations; that it is generally poverty that drives women into criminal activity and into prison; and that women's experiences of criminal justice and imprisonment are gendered. In recent years, studies of women in prison have begun to focus on the identities and subjectivities of imprisoned women. My thesis is a critical ethnography of women in prison in Ireland. In it I explore the manner in which the identities and subjectivities of Ireland's imprisoned women are discursively constructed and represented. Discourse is constitutive. I am concerned with analysing the manner in which, within sociocultural practice, female prisoner subjects are discursively positioned, the manner in which their identities are constructed and represented. Fundamentally, I'm concerned with the manner in which the self, the individual's sense of self, the individual's subjectivity, is constructed. Subjectivities are not constructed in isolation but in relation to historical experience and in relation to the social and spatial as inhabited by the individual. Identities are constructed, I suggest, by means of a conjoining of the historical, the social and the spatial. The individual, within this triple dialectic, constructs her subjectivity.

## **1.1 The Research Project**

In this thesis, I present my perspective on the discursive subject positioning of Ireland's imprisoned women. The discourses I consider are those of history, the media, penal institutions and penal experts. I examine how, within these discourses, imprisoned women are subject positioned. Discourse, according to Sunderland (2004), means broad constitutive system of meaning, or, she suggests, different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice. Discourses in this sense, she says, are indistinguishable from ideology. In my thesis I consider how, through this discursive positioning of the female prisoner subject, social relations of power are reproduced.

Prisoners are prisoners by virtue of the fact that they are imprisoned, they inhabit or occupy prison space. It is their occupation of that space, the space that is prison space that, above all, identifies the women of my study as prisoners. The power to confer criminality or criminal identity rests with the courts. The individual who has been identified as criminal by the criminal justice system may be punished by the state with a prison sentence. While the criminal justice system confers criminality, it is the experience of imprisonment that confers prisoner identity. Thus, it their occupation of the space that is prison space that produces females prisoners, that distinguishes the women of my study as prisoners. I examine in this thesis the discourses produced by the space that is Irish female prison space, and the manner in which that space impacts on the discursive production of the identities of Ireland's imprisoned women.

My thesis is a critical ethnography. The aim of my research is to explore, historically, socially and spatially, women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland. Within that exploration I:

- Consider women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland historically and contemporaneously;
- Consider the discourses produced by the Irish women's prisons, and within them, the discursive subject positioning of the women;
- Consider the manner in which the women respond to their discursive subject positioning through their presentations of self within Irish female prison space.

Women are currently imprisoned in Ireland in two prisons. Most of the women, about 80 of them, are imprisoned in the Dochas Centre, the new purpose built female prison opened in 1999 at a cost of £13m and situated within the Mountjoy Prison complex in Dublin. Limerick Prison, a male prison and the oldest prison in the country, has a capacity for 20 women. Women from the prison system are also held in the Central Mental Hospital in Dublin, the state's only forensic psychiatric hospital, in practice no more than three women at a time.

The current profile of women in prison in Ireland is radically different from the current profile of men in prison in Ireland. Where there are about 3,000 men in our prisons, many of them committed for serious offences, there are about 100 women, committed generally for nuisance type offences (see Appendix One for a list of Irish prisons). The population of our women's prisons is small and unstable, in the sense that the women generally come and go often very quickly from the prison, for the most part serving very short sentences. In comparisons with the male prison population, generally large and stable, the female prison population, generally small and unstable, is often constructed as more difficult, more marginalised, more troubled. This is a critical issue for women in prison in Ireland. It is a critical issue for them in terms of how they are represented and perceived. It is a fundamental issue in this research.

## 1.2 Situating the Research

The issues generally among the group of feminist writers concerned about and researching and writing about the female experience of the law and the female experience of imprisonment are: the gendered nature of women's criminality and women's experiences in prison; the forgottenness of female offending and women's imprisonment; and the vulnerabilities of women in prison. Carol Smart in 1976, pioneering these lines of enquiry, put forward a feminist analysis of female crime and criminality which highlighted the failure of earlier works on female criminality and female deviance to consider the separate social worlds of men and women, the failure of earlier works to ask why female criminality differs from male criminality, and the failure of the earlier works to ask why women are treated differently by criminal justice and penal systems. Pat Carlen, who has written extensively on women in prison (1983, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2004), has examined the relationship between poverty and crime, the differential treatment of women by penal systems, the invisibility of women prisoners, and the absence of coherent effective policies on women in the criminal justice and penal systems. In my work, I focus on profiling the women imprisoned in Ireland, on documenting their experiences of imprisonment, and on examining the manner in which their identities are shaped by their experiences of imprisonment.

Implicit in the concept of identity are issues of power and control, the degree of control we have over who we are and who we might become, and the power we have in shaping the self. Carlen and Worrall (1987: 1), question the extent to which an individual is free to shape her own actions, identity and consciousness independently of the economic, ideological and political circumstances in which she finds herself. In her work, Carlen, highlighting as mythical the benign prison (2002: 223), and arguing for women's prisons to be 'otherwise and womanwise' (1998: 171), reveals as middle class ideologies (2002: 230), the concepts of responsibility and accountability with which women in prison

are charged (see also Hannah-Moffat: 1995, 2001), while challenging the utility and validity of notions of agency and resistance (2002: 231), among imprisoned women. Bosworth's (1999), study of agency and power in women's prisons focuses on the effects of femininity on women in prison, on how women as agents negotiate power within prison, on how women negotiate the various discourses of prison and through these negotiations construct their identities. Bosworth highlights (1998: 48), the fact that few studies of prison have considered questions of identity or subjectivity, our sense of ourselves, or the way in which a person's gender, race or class, influences an individual's experience and understanding of prison and imprisonment. According to Bosworth (1999: 3), 'power in prison is constantly negotiated on the level of identity'. She grounds her analysis in imprisoned women's own words and experiences in order to elaborate our understanding of imprisoned women's sense of themselves and their sense of their imprisonment. Worrall commenting (1989: 83), on the absence of self-identity among the imprisoned women she studied, said that the women 'appeared to be defined – and to define themselves – in relation to other people and how they believed that other people viewed them'. My exploration of the women's identities is grounded in the discourses defining their prison experiences and in their own responses to those discourses. Very little has been published to date on the experiences of women imprisoned in Ireland. My thesis is an attempt to fill that gap. I am entering this debate in order to record women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland. In my research, I am concerned with documenting the prison experiences of women in prison in Ireland as such experiences have been documented internationally.

Nell McCafferty (1981), Ursula Barry (1986), Alpha Connelly (1993), Ciaran McCullagh (1995, 1996), Ivanna Bacik and Michael O'Connell (1998), have all written about the differential nature of female criminality in Ireland, the differential treatment of women before the courts in Ireland, and the correlation in Ireland between poverty and the crimes of women. Their work is addressed



in more detail in the following chapter. Several historians have documented Irish experiences of imprisonment<sup>1</sup>. Tim Carey published a book on Mountjoy Prison and its history (2000), with a couple of pages devoted to female prisoners and their experiences. Sinead McCoolle (1997, 2003), published two histories of Irish female revolutionaries and their experiences of Kilmainham Jail. There are occasional references to the experiences of imprisoned women in Pat Cooke's *History of Kilmainham Gaol* (1995). There is a chapter in Maria Luddy's (1995), book *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century Ireland* dedicated to women in prison in Ireland, and in 2001, Geraldine Curtin published her book on the women of Galway Jail.

Paul O'Mahony (1993, 1996, 1997, 2000), has written extensively about male prisoners and Irish prisons, and a four-page section of one of his books (1993), is dedicated to Monaghan's (1989), work on women in prison in Ireland. At the time of Monaghan's study, there were 47 women in prison in Ireland; the women at that time were all in one prison, Mountjoy Prison<sup>2</sup>. Monaghan found the women to be overwhelmingly from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the average age among them was 26 years; the average number of convictions was eight; their sentences were generally short. Most of the women, 71% of the sample, had been imprisoned for theft; one woman was serving a life sentence for murder. Almost three quarters of the women were found to have, at some stage, received psychiatric care, 53% had abused illicit drugs, over two-thirds had self-injured. The women were found to have low self-esteem; they were said to have described themselves as 'unsure, unattractive, nervous, changeable and unimportant' (O'Mahony: 1993: 203). O'Mahony in his book, compares Monaghan's demographic, criminogenic and health data, from her sample of 34 women of the total national female prison population of 47 women<sup>3</sup>, to his own 1986 survey of 110 male prisoners, one-fifth of the male prisoner population of Mountjoy Prison at that time, a time when nationally there were almost 2,000

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<sup>1</sup> This work is considered more fully in Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of Monaghan's work the women's prison at Limerick Prison was temporarily closed.

<sup>3</sup> The Irish female prison population at the time rarely exceeded 40 (O'Mahony, 1993: 120).

men in prison. In this unbalanced comparison, he found (1993: 306), that many more female prisoners than male prisoners were from the lowest socio-economic grouping, that women prisoners exhibited most of the personal problems seen in the male prisoner sample, 'hard drug use, suicidal behaviour and psychiatric caseness', but to a more serious extent. He concluded that the concentration of disadvantage was more marked for the women than the men. In fact, the concentration of disadvantage was found to be more marked for women than for men because in Ireland, very few women go to prison. Those who do are generally among the poorest, the most disadvantaged, in Irish society.

Two Healthcare Reports (Carmody and McEvoy: 1996, and The Centre for Health Promotion Studies, NUI Galway: 2000), have been published, one of which focused on Ireland's female prison population (Carmody and McEvoy, 1996). The Carmody and McEvoy *Study of Irish Female Prisoners* (1996), again found women in prison to be a very specific group of people: more likely to be poor; more likely to be mothers and to have a family network; less likely to be in a relationship; likely to have a history of psychiatric treatments; likely to have abused drugs from a young age; and likely to be resistant to drug treatment. The report attributed imprisoned women's tendency in prison to distress and self-injury to the exchange, through imprisonment, of the environment of the family home network for the environment of prison and prison cells. The second report, *The General Healthcare Study of the Irish Prison Population* (2000), was undertaken by the Centre for Health Promotion studies at the National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway, for the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Although 59 women prisoners (75% of the female prison population at that time when women constituted 2% of the Irish prison population), participated in the study, the report made no separate recommendations for the female prison population. Again, in comparisons with the male prisoner population throughout the report, as with O'Mahony's

comparison above, female prisoners were presented as more seriously marginalised, more seriously ill, and more seriously troubled (2000: 5).

Three PhD's have been completed dealing with women in prison in Ireland. In 1985 Francesca Lundström-Roche compared the 'ideal' and the 'real' of the prison experiences of women in prison in Ireland with the prison experiences of women in prison in Sweden. She found Sweden's 'ideal' of female imprisonment to be 'correctional care' while Ireland's was 'containment'. Lundström-Roche studied both experiences of being a prisoner and experiences of working in women's prisons, in both Sweden and Ireland. She interviewed 16 Irish women prisoners and 15 members of staff. She established (1985: 42), a classificatory scheme of three groups among prison staff and three groups among imprisoned women. The women's groups were *Losers*, of which there were four among the Irish sample, *Thieves and Robbers*, of which there were eleven, and *Exploiters*, of which there was one; the staff groups were, '*Distanced*', '*Undistanced*' and '*Mature*'. She then used this classificatory scheme to explore the prison experiences in both Sweden and Ireland. In Ireland she found (1985: 129), the emphasis to be on security, both staff and women prisoners painted a grim, almost medieval picture of the prisons. The prisons were decaying; they were gravely overcrowded and physically discomfoting. In one element of the research, Lundström-Roche examined '*The Self*' (1985: 80). Labelling this '*Emotions*' for women prisoners and '*The Job*' for staff, she attempted 'to describe their innermost, private feelings and emotions' (1985: 81). She describes experiences of infantilisation among the women, feelings of powerlessness, feelings of frustration and anger, and incidences of depression. She writes briefly of identity and she writes of it in terms of loss of identity. This loss of identity, she found, comes about where a woman, on committal to prison, leaves all her personal possessions at the reception area, is stripped of her clothes and jewellery, and then dressed in the 'sexless, shapeless uninviting garb' of the prisons. In terms of the experiences of women in prison in Ireland, Lundström-Roche's research was relatively

constrained. In her thesis, she studied two nations, and within those two nations, she studied the responses of both prison officers and female prisoners to their experiences of those nation's prisons. In my thesis, in contrast to Lundström-Roche's, I focus entirely on Irish women prisoners and on their experiences of imprisonment.

In 2001, Celesta McCann James completed her thesis, *Recycled Women: Oppression and the Social World of Women Prisoners in the Irish Republic*, in which she explored the experiences of 20 women in Mountjoy Women's Prison. At the time of this study, the women in Mountjoy Prison were still in the old female prison, a wing of St. Patrick's Institution for Young Offender (see Appendix 2 and Chapter Four). McCann James, in work comparable in ways to Bosworth's (1999), work on agency and resistance in women's prisons, examined the women's responses to forms of management in the Irish female prison. She found that the women formed small segregated social groups within which they gained 'a sense of belonging and a framework by which they can control one another as they compete for limited resources and privileges in Mountjoy' (McCann James: 2001: abstract). She found (2002: 122), the social structures which control women in Irish society to be mirrored and intensified in the women's prison. She found that the women responded to their oppression within prison by organising 'a specific relational environment', the subgroups. The women were found to align themselves with women they perceived as their peers. McCann James identified groups of 'drug addicts', 'mature women', 'school attenders', 'Travelling women', 'foreign women', 'kitchen crew' and 'loners'. These groups were found in the research to offer the women emotional and social substitutes for family and friends, while providing the women with a competitive edge. McCann James (2001: 127), found that the prison's regime and management procedures reproduce and intensify women's powerlessness and inequality, while the subgroups the women themselves form, further implement control mechanisms which parallel those used to oppress women in Irish society. My research picks up on McCann James's theme of control and

responses to control in the Irish female prison. Where McCann James considered the manifestations and effects of oppression on a number of women imprisoned in Mountjoy Female Prison in 1998, I am concerned in my work with documenting more broadly, historically and contemporarily, women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland.

In 2004, Barbara Mason in her ethnographic research posited the Dochas Centre as an experiment in women's imprisonment. The focus of the study was on the manner in which the women imprisoned in that prison coped with their new conditions, and how the Prison Officers reconciled the conflicting demands of the new regime with their more traditional role of discipline and control. Mason tracked the evolution of the experiment from what she found to be an initial period of 'great turmoil and uncertainty' created by the move, through a gradual period of adjustment, to a state of equilibrium. Following the turmoil, Mason documented the gradual development of the experiment during the 'settling down' period. Overall she concluded that staff and management of the prison did strive to meet the ideals as set out in the prison's vision statement. She found the despite many obstacles, such as breaches of security and resistance among some members of staff to the new ideals, the prison did eventually settle down into the new regime. These findings, according to Mason, contrasted with the outcomes of many other penal experiments, such as Holloway Prison in London, Cornton Vale in Scotland, and the new women's prisons in Canada (Mason: 2004).

In 2002, Ivanna Bacik's *Women and the Criminal Justice System* appeared as a chapter in Paul O'Mahony's *Criminal Justice in Ireland* (2002: 134-154). In this work Bacik, using annual police reports, demonstrates the low level generally of female participation in crime in Ireland, particularly violent crime; she highlights as the exception to this, women's relatively high participation in shoplifting offences. She establishes (2002: 136), that women, even when convicted of a crime, are less likely than men to go to prison, a theme

considered in more detail in the next chapter. She comments on the new women's prison the Dochas Centre and its new facilities. She draws attention to the reservations expressed by the *Irish Penal Reform Trust* regarding the emphasis on security in that prison. Finally Bacik (2002: 154), highlights as problematic, in terms of our ability in Ireland to address basic questions about women and crime, the lack of empirical research on women offenders in Ireland. In response to Bacik (2002), my thesis provides substantial empirical research on Ireland's imprisoned women. In contrast to Lundström-Roche's thesis (1985), my thesis is focused entirely on the experiences of women in prison in Ireland. In comparison to McCann James's (2002) and Mason's (2004) theses, my thesis explores more broadly the prison experiences of women in prison in Ireland.

### **1.3 The Thesis**

In relation to the contemporary debate as to whether women prisoners' identities are completely subjugated by the prison or whether women prisoners are able to resist identity-subjugation, my thesis is that, although women prisoners are subjugated as *prisoners*, they have developed ways to resist subjugation as *women*.

The thesis is primarily supported by:

- An overall analysis of the two main discourses (social and penological) within which identities of imprisoned women are constituted;
- Literature reviews and empirical research whereby those two main social and penological discourses are shown to draw upon selected historical (e.g. Chapter Four) popular, media and professional representations (e.g. Chapter Five) which, together, are partly

constitutive of the discursive contexts wherein women prisoners in turn constitute their social and prison identities;

- Analysis of the strategies, social and spatial, in which women prisoners engage to protect their pre-prison identities (e.g. Chapters Six and Seven).

#### **1.4 Organisation of the Chapters**

The following is an outline of the chapters of my thesis.

1.3 (i) In Chapter One I detail the aim of the study and the rationale for my thesis. The methodology and theoretical framework are introduced. The chapter contains a brief outline of the research that has been conducted; my own research is situated within that body of knowledge.

1.3 (ii) Chapter Two contains a review of the literature. In this chapter I construct the theoretical framework for the study. I explore discourses of female criminality and the female prison. I explore theories of lived space and female space, and theoretical discourses of prison and female prison space. I am concerned with exploring the manner in which in the literature, discourses of space and female prison space are seen to shape and engender identities.

1.2 (iii) Chapter Three is a comprehensive outline of the research methodology employed in the research. In the chapter I detail the research question. I outline the methods used and the fundamental sociological precepts within which the studied is grounded. I discuss the critical ethnographic approach undertaken in the thesis, and the feminist epistemological considerations that guide and support the thesis.

1.3 (iv) Chapter Four contains an analysis of the historic discourses structuring the experiences and identities of women in prison in Ireland since the 1800's. I document the changes and developments in the Irish female prison over two centuries. I consider the philosophies and policies of the Irish female prison. I consider the institutions within which women were imprisoned. I consider the women imprisoned, the numbers of women imprisoned, the sentences they received and the experiences of imprisonment provided for them. The analysis reveals, historically and contemporaneously, the discursive subject positioning of the women and the identities ascribed to them. The data analysed is from published and archived memoirs, historiographies, prison records and reports.

1.3 (v) Chapter Five contains an analysis, within contemporary discourses, of the discursive subject positioning of the women. The discourses considered are those of the media, of experts, and of the institutions, the two women's prisons. I examine these discourses in relation to the identities they ascribe to imprisoned women. I consider the manner in which the women are represented in the discourses. I detail the manner in which the women are subject positioned and the implications of that positioning. I consider contemporary structures of the women's prisons. The designs and the routines of the prisons are documented, as are management and staffing of the prisons, the educational, and healthcare provision and the accommodations within the prisons. The data analysed is from observations, interviews, archives and newspapers accounts.

1.3 (vi) In Chapter Six, I profile the women currently imprisoned in Ireland, the numbers of women imprisoned, and the offences for which they are imprisoned. The chapter documents the ways in which women themselves experience the prisons, their engagement with the discourses of the prisons, and their senses of themselves. The analysis is primarily of data from interviews conducted with 83 of Ireland's imprisoned women. This analysis is supported by analysis of data from observations conducted in the prisons, from documentary and other



interview data, and from newspaper reports about the women and the women's prisons.

1.3 (vii) In Chapter Seven I present a photographic narrative of women's presentations of self within Irish prison space, a cultural inventory of Irish female prison space, and an analysis of the women's subject positioning of themselves, their representations of self, within that space. Through these analyses I demonstrate the effect on the women of their positioning in the various discourses explored in the previous chapters.

1.4 (viii) Chapter Eight contains the conclusion to the work. It summarises the thesis, the case in support of it, and its contribution to understanding women's imprisonment. The meaning, effect and implications of experiences of imprisonment for women imprisoned in Ireland are established. The main conclusions centre on the critical elements of women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland and the manner in which these prison experiences shape the women, their identities, their subjectivities, their senses of self.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

**‘Everything in history is expressed in symbols – greatness and degradation, victory and defeat, happiness, prosperity, want, and above all identity’, (Maalouf: 2000: 61).**

In the literature on women prisoners and women’s imprisonment, there are two strands of analysis, one of which tends to represent women in prison as victims, (among those who have written on this side of the debate are Heidensohn 1975, Carlen 1983, 1988, Dobash et al 1986, Eaton 1993, Carmody and McEvoy 1996, Chesney-Lind 1991, Watterson 1996, Wyner 2003) and one of which tends to represent women in prison as resisters, (Worrall 1990, Peckham 1985, Bosworth 1999, Denton 2001, McCann James 2001). The debate is about the degree to which women are victims of penal regimes, these accounts detailing generally the appalling experiences of women in prison, and, on the other side, the degree to which women can resist those regimes, studies which tend to represent imprisoned women as powerful agents, agents capable of overcoming the exigencies of the penal regimes within which they are imprisoned. In a relatively recent contribution to this debate, Carlen and Worrall (2004: 89), pointed out that while some researchers have established that particular female prisoners may in particular instances be capable of resistance, in prison it is in fact the phenomenon of prisoner resistance which actually activates the prison’s disciplinary and security mechanisms (Carlen and Worrall: 2004: 20). In my thesis, I explore this debate through my examination of the discursive subject positioning of women in prison in Ireland. In this literature review, I begin that exploration.

We live in a social world; that world is historical, it has an ever-accumulating past which shapes it and shapes our experiences of it; and that world is fundamentally and ontologically spatial. I am concerned in this chapter with exploring in the literature the manner in which space, and in particular female prison space, engenders and shapes identities. One of the key debates in sociology is the extent to which individuals actively participate in shaping their

own identities. The debate is about the extent to which human beings, as agents, are able to shape their own identities, make choices, and take responsibility, and the extent to which their identities are influenced, even determined, by factors outside their control. Woodward (2003: 3), highlights the overlap in the literature between the terms self, subject and identity. She suggests that preference is often given to the term identity, because the term identity accommodates 'the interrelationship between the personal and the social, and the complex possibilities of an interplay between agency, personal choice, personal power and personal responsibility, and social construction or constraint'. I am concerned in this thesis with the manner in which the individual's sense of self, the individual's subjectivity, is constructed. Subjectivities are not constructed in isolation but in relation to the historical experience, and in relation to the social and spatial milieu, which individuals inhabit. Identities are constructed by means of a conjoining of the personal and the historical, the social and the spatial. The individual within this triple dialectic constructs her subjectivity.

## **2.1 Identity Criminality and Penalty**

Criminal identity is a very powerful identity. The individual who has been identified by the criminal justice system as criminal may be punished by the state with a prison sentence. The model of crime and punishment that embraces imprisonment as its ultimate sanction consistently and insistently reduces deviance to the level of the individual where the individual, generally a member of the 'fringe of the lower class which is constantly in contact with the police and law' (Foucault: 1974b: 158), is deviant, and responsible for that deviance. Within the construct that is prison, despite its abiding centrality in our model of social control, structural causes of deviance are not recognised, acknowledged, challenged or corrected<sup>1</sup>. The construct that is prison (see Sparks: 1994: 14-29,

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<sup>1</sup> In the utilitarian (actions and consequences) vision of justice, (Mill: 1993 Edition), and in Bentham's (2000 Ed), quantification of morality by reference to utilitarian outcomes (extrapolated from Hume's work), the notion of sacrifice becomes formidable where justice is defined at the expense of the individual in terms of maximising good for the

and Sparks and Bottoms: 1995: 45-62 for an exploration of legitimacy<sup>2</sup> and prisons), emerged from an imperative of social control. Internationally, many writers have considered the subject of social control and the state<sup>3</sup> (Rusche and Kirchheimer: 1968, Hall, et al: 1978, Cohen and Scull: 1983, Garland and Young: 1983, Garland: 1996, Scraton: 1987, Melossi: 1989, Garland: 1990, 1996, 2002, Sparks et al: 1996, Rawls: 1999, Braithwaite: 2000, Rose: 2000, Reiner: 2000, Garland and Sparks: 2000, and Kilcommins et al: 2004). Many writers have considered the subject of social control, prisons and imprisonment (Bentham: 1791, Durkheim: 1984 (ed), Christie: 1981, Rothman: 1971, Foucault: 1974, 1977, Ignatieff: 1978, Cohen, 1985, Hale: 1989, Melossi: 1989, Howe: 1994 and Sparks 1995). From restorative justice to bureaucratic justice from feudalism to capitalism, from the development of total institutions dedicated to the reformation of deviant individuals to the state's strategies of control of late modernity, the state has unflinchingly supported the institution of the prison. The state has given imprisonment a role as the strategy of ultimate sanction, centralising imprisonment and, in terms of identity, prisonerising (Irwin and Cressey: 1962), and dangerising<sup>4</sup> (Douglas: 1992, Lianos and Douglas: 2000), prisoners<sup>5</sup>.

In Ireland, the discourses of criminal deviance are in part constructed by the Irish state and the deviances it chooses to identify and then punish<sup>6</sup> (see

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majority. The Rawlsian theory of justice (Rawls: 1999), equates justice with fairness and equality, where inequalities may affect initial chances at the start of life, the situation into which one is born, inequalities in terms of contributions to society, inequalities in terms of competencies. The antisacrificial element of Rawlsian justice holds that potential victims must not be sacrificed even to the common good.

<sup>2</sup> 'The social contract appears to be capable only of drawing its legitimacy from a fiction... because peoples...do not know they are sovereign, not be reason of an imaginary contract, but by virtue of the will to live together that they have forgotten... (and) the desire to live well with and for others in just institutions', (Ricoeur: 1994: 239).

<sup>3</sup> Chadwick and Little in their work (1987), consider how the social control of women leads to state control (see also Smart and Smart: 1978).

<sup>4</sup> 'The idea of dangerousness meant that the individual must be considered by society at the level of his potentialities, and not at the level of his actions' (Foucault: 2001: 57). Penalty has the function of correcting individuals at the level of their behaviour, their attitudes, their dispositions, the danger they represent - at the level of their supposed potentialities (Foucault: 2001: 67).

<sup>5</sup> 'You (society) signalled to us (prison guards) that they (prisoners) are wild beasts; we signal in turn to them. And when they have learned it well behind their bars, we will send them back to you' (Foucault interviewed by Simon: 1974: 157).

<sup>6</sup> McCullagh (1995) details (Irish cases), the Bantry Bay oil disaster (1979) in which 50 people died, there were no criminal convictions; the Goodman investigation, a corporate fraud case, again no criminal convictions; tax evasion, criminal convictions very rare; insider dealing, an offence only since 1990; the Stardust night club disaster (1981), in which 48 people died, no criminal charges: he juxtaposes these events with statistics on larceny where in 1993 just over

Foucault: 1977 for an analysis of the state and its construction of deviances). Fennel demonstrated in her analysis (1993: 171), how in Ireland crimes are mainly committed by men, poorer men, who represent the types of dishonesty engaged in by working class people and the criminalisation of that type of deviance. Fennel found that women in prison in Ireland represent a tiny minority of prisoners<sup>7</sup>, that they are mainly poor women and are also representative of the type of deviance that is criminalised in Ireland<sup>8</sup>. The Irish state's strategy of signalling effective criminal justice through its construction of criminality was demonstrated by McCullagh (1995: 410-431); McCullagh outlined how violent crimes and property crimes, many of them drug related, are allied in Ireland to the public image of the typical criminal.

Many other Irish writers have demonstrated the use of criminality and the prison by the state in signalling an effective criminal justice system (McCafferty: 1981, Tomlinson et al: 1988, Fennel: 1993, Connelly: 1993, McCullagh: 1996, O'Mahony: 1993, 1996, 2000, O'Donnell and O'Sullivan: 2001, and Kilcommins et al (2004)). Kirby et al (2002: 9), highlighted how the Irish state is currently imprisoning more people than ever before in its history (see also O'Donnell: 2004). They found that between 1997 and 2000, 2000 new extra prison places were created; that there were three successive tax amnesties, 1988, 1993 and 2001; that in 1999-2000; that there were twenty times more checks on social welfare claims than on tax returns; and that as the economic life of the country is becoming more deregulated, the social life is becoming more regulated through the expansion of CCTV and information surveillance technology (Kirby et al: 2002: 9, see also Ainley: 1998, and Graham: 1999: 131-148).

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47,000 larcenies were recorded, 44% involved amounts less than £100, 63% amounts of £200 or less, with only 8% involving amounts of £1,000 and over.

<sup>7</sup> 'In 1996 a total of 5,202 persons were convicted of indictable offences in Ireland, of these only 476, less than 10%, were women. Only 1.8% of Irish prisoners are women' (Bacik and O'Connell: 1998: 6)

<sup>8</sup> Since Fennel wrote this there has been in Ireland a decade of court cases about child sex abuse. Many, if not most, of those prosecuted for the offences have been middle class men. Women have not featured as defendants in these cases although female religious orders have formally apologised and made reparations to individuals who suffered child abuse, as opposed to child sexual abuse, in their institutions.

The reactive nature of the Irish state's strategy for constructing criminality was demonstrated in a recent analysis of social control and the state, O'Donnell's and O'Sullivan's study (2001). This study traces the development by the Irish state of a 'triple lock'<sup>9</sup> of criminal justice policies in part to the 1996 murders in Ireland of Detective Garda Jerry McCabe and two weeks later journalist Veronica Guerin (2001: 2). These murders resulted in Ireland, according to O'Donnell and O'Sullivan (2001: 2), in a textbook case of moral panic<sup>10</sup> (see Cohen: 1972), 'it was almost as if a state of national emergency had been declared' (O'Donnell and O'Sullivan: 2001: 3). The state's response to the moral panic was the institution of triple lock criminal justice policies. The force of the moral panic generated an equally forceful criminal justice response. The individual within this system, when established in court as having offended, is vociferously identified and represented as criminal. When criminalised, the individual is imprisoned, stigmatised and dangerised. Lianos and Douglas (2000: 104-125), discuss the concept of dangerisation, in relation to high levels of risk awareness, to public perceptions of danger, to the primitive fear of otherness, and in relation to the institutional environment. Beck (1992), writes of 'Risk Society', of contemporary societies being increasingly characterised by struggles to escape 'bad' things rather than struggles to attain 'good' things. In this risk society, the effect of incarceration, imprisonment or confinement in an asylum or prison, appears to be a perceptual exaggeration of the pathology of the incarcerated, an emphasis of the separateness of the individual, mad and/or bad, from the community. O'Mahony (2000: 44), states that:

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<sup>9</sup> Zero-tolerance policing; new criminal justice legislation (the Criminal Justice Act 1999), including mandatory minimum drug sentences and a referendum to widen the grounds on which bail could be refused (Nov. 1996, within months of the Guerin and McCabe murders); and massive expansion of the prison system (2000 extra prison places). O'Donnell and O'Sullivan (2001: 43), outline how John Timoney, Irish born Deputy Police Commissioner of New York City helped Fianna Fail draw up its 'zero tolerance' approach to crime before it returned to government in June 1997: they document a similar development in Britain, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Crime Reduction Programme, which they trace to the James Bulger murder. They connect the zero tolerance developments with zero tolerance policing in New York City (2001: 34, see also Reiner: 2000: 73), heralded by the 'made for media' sound bites: Michael Howard's 'prison works', Tony Blair's 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' (Reiner: 2000: 83).

<sup>10</sup> 'Violent crime', according to Melossi (1989: 322), '....lends itself to situations of "moral panics".'

**‘for most prisoners the message of their prison experience, the physical, psychological and social conditions in which they are forced to live, is obvious and stark. They know themselves to be neglected, rejected and, in some minds, totally demonised’.**

He says (2000: 96), that the Irish criminal justice and penal systems blame people for what they are, and attribute the things that people do to what they are, while scrupulously refusing to consider what it is that makes people what they are.

Women who have been criminalised and imprisoned have new spoiled identities or they have old spoiled identities reinforced. Goffman wrote (1963: 15), that the spoiled identity or stigmatised self has to be managed, as any identity has to be managed. He says (1963: 15), that we think of individuals with stigmas as not quite human, further he said (1963: 16), that we see any defensive response on their behalf to their stigma as a reflection of the condition, ‘a direct expression of defect’. He concluded that, for society, both the stigma and the defensiveness occasioned in the stigmatised by the stigma, are expressions of ‘just retribution’. Goffman drew on George Herbert Mead’s work (1934), in presenting the individual as having many roles and multiple identities, the individual in the course of a lifetime is required to present different selves. Goffman developed Mead’s understanding of roles, in his analysis of the performative in human interactions. He divided identity into social and virtual, into the public and private self, into front stage and back stage performances. Goffman (1963: 134-146), noted the obligation on all of us in society to be who we are expected to be, he said that the cripple must be crippled, just as many women must be what men expect them to be.

In my work, I consider the manner in which and the means by which imprisoned women play the part of imprisoned women, the manner in which and the means by which they adopt the role, persona and identities of imprisoned women. In my thesis it is the self, as agent, the subject capable of designating itself (Ricoeur: 1994: 113), that negotiates identity within power

relations. This negotiation is always a negotiation between more and less powerful agents, a power balance, or imbalance, that is most pronounced within prison. The spoiled identity of the imprisoned woman is an ascribed identity, fundamentally an identity of the gazes. For imprisoned women the discourses of the gazes of the prison and the criminal justice system transdiscursively, or intertextually, ascribe to them their spoiled identities. For each woman then, the transdiscursively ascribed identity, like a badge, a label, an emblem or emblems of identity, is attached to the self. It is something worn by the self, a phenomenon separate and apart from the self. The individual woman responds to this process. The response on the part of the individual is performative. Bell (1999: 2) writes of how identities are produced, embodied, and performed. The individual copes with and responds to this transdiscursively ascribed identity through performativity. The individual internalises the ascribed identity. Then, having absorbed the ascribed identity and incorporated it into their personal identity, the individual performs an identity for the gazes.

Judith Butler (1990, 1993), drawing on the work of Erving Goffman, developed the notion of performativity in post-structuralist and psychoanalytic critiques. Butler posited identity not as some authentic core self but rather as the dramatic effect of performances developed through imitation, fabrication and manipulation (Butler: 1990: 25, see also Bell: 1999). Butler holds that identity is performatively constituted. She writes of acting as power. She suggests that it is through acting, the power to act, that will is produced, but she says that it is through the invocation of convention that acting derives its power. Further, she wrote that performativity must not be understood as a single or deliberate act but rather as the reiterative and citational practice through which discourse produces the effect that it names (Butler: 1993: 2). Although Giddens (1991: 54), suggests that a person's identity is not found in their behaviour or in the judgement of others but in their capacity to 'keep a particular narrative going', it seems to me that the capacity to keep a narrative going rests fundamentally with the judgement of others. For Ireland's imprisoned women it is, I believe,



as Paul Ricoeur suggests, the identity of the story which makes the identity of the character (Ricoeur: 1994: 147-148). One idea fundamental to Foucault's investigation of power (Gordon in Faubion: 2001: xix), is that of the constitution of subjectivity through power relations, the intention of power to teach, to mold conduct, to instill forms of self-awareness and identities. Garland (1990: 249-250), argues that penal institutions positively construct and extend cultural meanings as well as repeating or reaffirming them. Punishment like any major social institution generates its own local meanings which contribute to the bricolage of the dominant culture. Subjectivity, personhood and personal identity are all socially and culturally constructed and penalty, according to Garland (1990: 271), takes a part in this 'making up people', helping to form subjectivities, selves and identities.

Discourse is constitutive. Discourse, according to Sunderland (2004: see also Chapter One: page 2, this work), means broad constitutive system of meaning, or, she suggests, different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice. Discourses in this sense, she says, are indistinguishable from ideology, (see Eagleton: 1991, for a study of ideology). For Foucault (1984), discourses are intrinsically ideological flows of information. Within discourse, identities are constructed. Discourses are 'ways of seeing' (Berger: 1972), the world. They are ideological flows of information through which the social is constructed and communicated. Discourses are constituted through power; the power that constitutes them also transmits them, or communicates them. This is Foucault's order of things, his knowledge/power nexus. For Foucault, social reality is always discursively produced. Highlighting the strength of the constitutive potential of discourses, Judith Butler said (1993: 2), that discourse has the capacity to produce that which it names. Thus, discourse is more than just perspective, discourses call into being particular realities. The powerful, through discourse, create knowledge and circulate it and in this way, produce that which is known that which is real. Reality is produced, or that which is generally and popularly accepted as reality.

## 2.2 Gender and Class: The Critical Dimensions

Gender has been and is a defining feature shaping women's experiences of imprisonment. In my thesis, I explore the manner in which and the degree to which in Ireland, women's experiences of and responses to imprisonment are prompted by the Irish female prison's various constructions and representations of femininity. Women's criminality has long been established as being different from men's criminality. Women's experiences of social control and the state are and have been different from men's experiences of social control and the state. Carlen wrote of women as being by and large a law-abiding lot<sup>11</sup>, and she suggested that the different modes of social regulation for women have resulted in particularly female patterns of law-breaking, of criminalisation and of penal regulation (1988: 5). Ideological constructions of appropriate femininity are frequently, if not generally, patriarchal. Scraton (1990: 14), outlines the socio-legal-political potency of patriarchy: 'It combines the use of force and violence against women with the language, ritual, convention and legal discourses of subordination'. Scraton points to McKinnion's statement that 'the state is male in a feminist sense' (Scraton: 1990: 21), that 'power is institutionalised in a masculine and indeed masculinist form'. Morris (1989: 105), recounts the thoughts of an imprisoned woman, 'a woman in the system is 10 times, 100 times more devastated, because it's a man's world in and out of the system...' (see Cardozo-Freeman: 1884, for an exploration of male culture in a maximum-security prison, see Stern: 1989 for a study of Britain's prisons, see Hannah Moffat: 1991 for a study of Canadian Women's Prisons). Eaton (1993: 17), details the rigorous control exercised over women in prison, where from their appearance at the prisons' reception areas, every woman's sense of self is 'subsumed into the identity 'prisoner' (see also O'Dwyer and Carlen: 1994: 307-308, and see Lundström-Roche: Chapter One: pages 6-7, see Garfinkel: 1956, on degradation ceremonies, see also Finkelstein: 2001).

The control that is imprisonment, 'existential death' according to Jose-Kampner (1990: 110-125), is manifest in the architecture, in the regime, in the rules and regulations, in the discipline, in the linguistics of the prison (see also Watterson: 1996 Ed.). It is manifest in the signs and symbols of the prison, in its rituals, in its education and healthcare, in its organised physical coercion (Sparks and Bottoms: 1995: 48). And as Eaton (1993: 35), points out, it is manifest in the presence of men who, 'reiterate a model of coercive control' with which female inmates are already familiar<sup>12</sup>. Chesney-Lind (1991: 51), urges a feminist analysis of the state's increasing willingness to imprison women, which she in part attributes to judicial policies such as the 'war on drugs', in order to develop our understanding of the role of imprisonment in the maintenance of patriarchy. Chesney-Lind (1991: 64), calls for a rebuilding of the literature on women's prisons particularly that relating the incarceration of women to patriarchy. Walby (1990), in her consideration of patriarchy (see also Bartky: 1990, Radke and Stam: 1994, and Bourdieu: 2001), explores women's subordination in contemporary society, 'the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of different aspects of women's subordination' (Walby: 1990: 2). Walby points to women's everyday experiences for the causes of women's subordination, the family as the site of women's oppression, the confinement of women to the private sphere. She points to housework and wage labour as sites of women's exploitation by men. She writes of the threat of male violence and fear of male violence. And she writes of men's flight from responsibilities, the flight from fatherhood. She writes of patriarchal sexual relations<sup>13</sup>, of sexual violence, of compulsory heterosexuality and of the sexual double standard (see Inglis 1998 for a consideration of Irish sexuality). Walby (1990: 104), contends that gender differentiated forms of subjectivities are generated everywhere within patriarchal cultures, within institutions which

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<sup>11</sup> When Carlen wrote this book in 1988, women represented 3% of the prison population of England and Wales (1988: 4).

<sup>12</sup> Garland and Young (1983: 22), observe that 'an offender who is sentenced to imprisonment becomes the object of a relation of force (resistance will be met with physical coercion and violence 'if necessary'), which is at one and the same time legal'.

<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu (2001: 21), writes of male desire as the desire for possession, eroticised domination, and female desire as the desire for masculine domination, as eroticised subordination.

create, within a patriarchal gaze, representations of women (1990: 21). Mahon (1994), explored Ireland's public and private patriarchy. She quoted Walby's assertion (1994: 1279), that in Ireland, private patriarchy is dominant. She highlighted the significance of Catholicism in the maintenance of patriarchy, and she argued that in Ireland, the Catholic Church formed part of the cultural superstructure. O'Connor (1998a: 30), in her work considered the discourses of Irish society and their role in the partisan treatment of women. She suggested (1998), that while patriarchy is recognized as a key element in understanding the experiences of women in Irish society (see also Connelly: 1993, Connolly: 1996, Byrne and Leonard: 1997, and Murphy-Lawless: 2002), there is a need (O'Connor: 1998a: 72), for discussion in Ireland on the extent and nature of male control<sup>14</sup>. She said that: 'it is necessary to go beyond identifying this, to explore the practices and processes through which it becomes a reality; the discourses and processes which legitimate and/or obscure these practices'.

In addition to gender, class was and it still is a defining element of women's experiences of imprisonment. Carlen (1988: 19), said that since the 1800's, prisons have been used to discipline disproportionate numbers of the poor, the socially inept, the socially disadvantaged. She says that still today, lower class

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<sup>14</sup> Galligan (1993: 207-226), details that, with the exception of the appointment of Countess Markievicz as Minister for Labour in the government elected by the first Dail in 1919, no woman held a cabinet post in Ireland until 1979. In 1979 Marie Geoghegan-Quinn was appointed Minister for the Gaeltacht. Galligan found that of the 136 people who held full ministerial positions from independence to 1993, only 5 (4%) had been women; before 1993 there was never more than one woman in the cabinet at any time; in 1993 there were 16 parliamentary committees with a total of 285 members, 40 of whom (14%), were women. Galligan found a similar pattern in women's representation in local government. In 1967, 3% of seats at local government level were held by women, in 1974, 5%, in 1979, 6.8%, in 1985, 8% and in 1991, 11%. In 1970, the report of *The Commission on the Status of Women* further detailed Ireland's patriarchal culture noting that there was only one woman among the board members of the 10 leading state-sponsored bodies. Galligan (1993) found that in 1992, women represented 15% of the total of 2,073 members of state boards. The number of women in influential positions in the organisations of the 'social partners', trade union, employer and agricultural interests, were low; none of the senior official positions in the Confederation of Irish Industry, the Federation of Irish Employers, or the Irish Farmers' Association, in the decade preceding 1993 had been held by a woman. There was a similarly poor record of women's representation in the senior levels of the Civil Service. Research published in 1991, (Eager: 1991, quoted in Galligan: 1993: 213), established that there were no women among the senior positions of Secretary and Deputy Secretary, the majority of women filled lower level clerical and typing grades. The same pattern was found in the judiciary where, in 1993, there were six women justices (14%), out of a total of 84. There were five justices in total in the Supreme Court, one of whom was a woman, (Ms Justice Denham was the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court, she was appointed in 1992), there were 16 justices in the High Court, one of whom was a woman, there were 17 justices in the Circuit Court, there were no women among them, and there were 46 justices in the District Courts, there were 4 women among them. At this time, about half of all solicitors and one-quarter of barristers were women, (research by Connelly and Hilliard: 1993, quoted in Galligan: 1993: 213). Research conducted by Bacik et al, (2003), found that, in this century, women constitute 21% of judges in Ireland, 34% of barristers and 41% of solicitors are women, only 9% of senior barristers are women and only one Managing Partner from 13 larger solicitors' firms in Dublin is a woman.

offenders, disadvantaged by powerlessness and poverty, are more likely to be over-criminalised than offenders from other classes. She describes the more extreme experiences of imprisonment of poorer offenders suggesting that in prison, such individuals are likely to be labelled 'difficult' (1988: 6), and so subjected within prison to more intense surveillance and correction than offenders from other classes. Elias's (2000 Ed.), analysis of civility and incivility, the civilised and the uncivilised<sup>15</sup>, gives insight into the manner in which a class-based criminal justice system can facilitate the vilification, punishment and degradation of particular groups and individuals in society. Bourdieu (1973), explores the relationship between cultural reproduction and social reproduction, and the role of cultural capital in the reproduction of the structure of relations between classes, in the perpetuation of class distinction, and through it, class inequality. Bourdieu details (1991), the manner in which social classes, through language and action, are discursively produced.

O'Mahony, in his work on Irish prisons, states categorically (1998: 61), that 'in Ireland the issue is class'; that the Irish prison population appears to be drawn in a much more concentrated way, than in England and Wales, from poor, socially and economically disadvantaged sectors of society (1998: 61). Bacik et al (1998), in their research, found residing in an economically deprived area of Dublin to be a strong risk factor for District Court appearance; they suggested that their data in fact indicated that the institution that is the Dublin District Court system is there *for* people from deprived areas. O'Mahony (2000: 16), held that the Irish prison population is highly homogenous and he (2000), with O'Donnell (1998: 31), and McCullagh (2002b), found that Irish prison populations are by and large characterised by poverty and multiple disadvantage. The impact of the class system on the female prison population has been considered by Monaghan (1989), by Carmody and McEvoy (1996), and by the General Health Care Study of the Irish Prison Population (2000) (see

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<sup>15</sup> He writes (2000: 6), that in some cultures, the value which a person has by mere existence, without any accomplishments, is very minor. He discusses Western concepts of behaviour typical of 'civilised' people, and he states that there is almost nothing which cannot be done in a 'civilised' or 'uncivilised' way.

Chapter One). All three highlighted the impoverishment and marginality of Ireland's imprisoned women. All three found that many of the women imprisoned in Ireland are so poor, powerless and disadvantaged they might be described as being of an 'underclass'<sup>16</sup>.

The nature of Irish female criminality in the 1970's was illustrated by McCafferty (1981: 64-73), where she detailed some of the cases of women appearing in Dublin courts: among them the grandmother who stole a babysuit and sweater and went to prison for three months; the story of Rosie (McCafferty: 1981: 116), who wanted to go to Mountjoy Prison 'for a rest'; and the case of the street traders, 'four barrels of Guinness standing on the street with baskets or boxes of flowers laid out on top', obstructing traffic and discommoding the flower shops in the area. In the 1980's, Rottman (1984) in a study of the socio-economic characteristics of those arrested for an indictable offence in Dublin, found the female offenders (16% of his population), to be young, unemployed or in marginal employment, and from the inner city. In recent years, there have been some changes in the structure of the Irish criminality and in the structure of Irish prison populations. These changes relate particularly to the imprisonment of large numbers of middle class men for child sex offences, detailed already (footnote 7: page 16), and the imprisonment of large numbers of male and relatively large numbers of female international drug couriers (see Chapter Six), manifestations of globalisation within the Irish prison population. The globalisation of the Irish female prison population has had, as will be seen in this thesis, a profound effect on the Irish female prison and perceptions of female criminality in Ireland.

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<sup>16</sup> People of the 'underclass' do not participate in society; they live chaotic criminal lives. According to Seabrook (2002: 94), the notion of an underclass developed in the Reagan era in the United States and the function of the concept is to effectively exonerate government from responsibility for the lives of these people. The underclass is the undeserving poor, the lumpenproletariat, as opposed to the deserving poor. They serve to warn those who do participate in society of the perils of not participating in society, and as such function in fact as agents of control.

### 2.3 Historical Representations of Criminal Women

Foucault's phrase, a saturnalia of punishment (1977: 261), is useful in attempting to develop a synopsis of the history of punishments inflicted upon women and the performatory, dramatic and entertaining elements of these punishments. Dobash et al (1986: 17, see also Larner: 1980), detail that 80-90% of the thousands of people executed as witches between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries were women<sup>17</sup>. They suggest (1986: 18), that witch-hunts were a tool in the arsenal of the powerful in controlling the superstitious populations. 'Women's bodies were the instruments for exorcising political and social evils, establishing the power of institutions, and for the symbolic marking of boundaries of appropriate female behaviour' (Dobash et al, 1986:18). They discuss (1986: 18) the physical punishments, pillory and stocks, and the symbolic punishments, misrules and charivaris, of the eighteenth century, and they conclude that these punishments were often directed at women and men who offended the patriarchal order of society. Where male dominance was considered the natural order, female leaders risked being labelled public nuisances, shrews, nags, viragos; cucking and ducking were devices used to control such women as was the scold's or gossip's bridle<sup>18</sup>. The power to punish was patriarchal.

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<sup>17</sup> Famous burnings of Irish women for witchcraft include the condemnation for witchcraft and heresy of Dame Alice Kytler by Bishop Richard Ledrede and the burning of her maid Petronella in Kilkenny in the 1320's, (Brennan: 2000: 37); the burning to death in 1895 by her husband, family and neighbours of twenty-six year old Bridget Cleary, believed to be a changeling left by fairies who had taken the real Bridget away, (Bourke: 1999). Bourke, (1999: 33-34), details many nineteenth-century newspaper accounts in Ireland of similar incidents, most of them involving elderly women or severely disabled small children, burned, beaten, drowned or otherwise tortured and/or killed in order 'to put the fairy out'.

<sup>18</sup> 'The branks of an iron cage placed over the head, and most examples incorporated a spike or pointed wheel that was inserted into the offender's mouth 'in order to pin the tongue and silence the noisiest brawler'. The common form of administering this punishment was to fasten the branks to a woman and parade her through the village, sometimes chaining her to a pillar for a period of time after the procession' (Dobash et al, 1986:19). Dobash et al state (1986:19), that while the scold's bridle was a public chastisement, in some towns arrangements were made for employing the branks within the home. 'In the old-fashioned, half-timbered houses in the borough (Congleton), there were generally fixed on one side of the large open fire-place, a hook; so that, when a man's wife indulged her scolding propensities, the husband sent for the town jailer to bring the bridle and had her bridled and chained to the hook until she promised to behave herself' (Dobash et al, 1986:20, quoting from Jewitt, 'Scolds and how they cured them in the good old times', *The Reliquary* (October 1860:18)). Inglis (2003: 227), referred to the Joanna Hayes story, Joanne Hayes was in 1984, accused of infanticide, following the discovery of two dead babies in Co. Kerry, as a modern day witch hunt (see also McCafferty: 1985). He wrote, 'what happened to her was not very different from what happened to other sexually transgressive women. Sometimes the process of shaming, demeaning and demoralising women can become indistinguishable from demonising them. To demonise a woman is to make out that she is so harmful, so disruptive, so deviant and so deprived, that she is not just extraordinary, but unnatural: so much so that she infects and destroys the existing social order. Joanne Hayes was antithetical to the good Irish mother'.

Confinement has long been used to control and to punish women. Dobash et al (1986: 15) discuss the confinement of women in nunneries, monasteries, castles and watchtowers from the Middle Ages. According to them (1986: 22), voluntary entrants were usually aristocratic and upper class women<sup>19</sup>. Women forced into convents were usually 'political prisoners, illegitimate, disinherited, physically deformed or mentally defective'. Unwanted women or 'nuisance' women could be deposited in convents by fathers or husbands; imprisoned within the rules and confinements of convent life. In the 1500's the first houses of correction opened<sup>20</sup>. By the seventeenth century prisoners in penal institutions were being categorised and segregated and trained to labour within the institution's economic production system. Women confined in prisons were put to labouring to maintain the institution within which they were incarcerated and they were taught a trade, through whatever commodity production the institution engaged in, or they were leased out to merchants and manufacturers. Dobash et al (1986: 15), detail how modern penal institutions dealing with the crimes and deviance's of women are responses shaped by gender and class assumptions through institutional and ideological patterns associated with patriarchy and early capitalism<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), in her novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800), set in Ireland, details (1964:30 and 125), the 'conjugal imprisonment' of Lady Cathcart<sup>1</sup> (1692?-1789), She was the widow of the eighth Baron Cathcart (d 1740) her third husband, when she married Col. Hugh Macguire, an Irish soldier-adventurer and fortune hunter, in 1745. When she refused to give him her property and jewels he abducted her from their home in Hertfordshire to a castle in Co. Fermanagh, where he kept her confined till his death in 1764, when she returned to England, dying childless in 1789' (Edgeworth, 1964:125). On release, on her husband's death, she'...looked scared, and her understanding seemed stupefied; she said that she scarcely knew one human creature from another: her imprisonment lasted above twenty years'.

<sup>20</sup> The old Bridewell Palace of Henry VI was the first in London and gave its name to similar institutions in Britain. Idle, destitute or lewd women were usually whipped and carted through the streets of London to their incarceration in the Bridewell. Husbands, parents and masters as well as magistrates and members of the judiciary had the power to confine women in the Bridewell. In 1597 the first unique penal institution for women opened in St Ursule's Convent in Amsterdam. When this institution burned down, the Spinhuis, which opened in 1645, replaced it. 'In the beginning, the Spinhuis, ...housed mostly poor, wayward and 'disrespectful' women and girls, but within ten years it began to house women committed for prostitution, theft and other forms of crime. It was intended to be a paternalistic house of correction as the motto over the door attested, "Fear not! I do exact vengeance for evil but compel you to be good. My hand is stern, but my heart is kind' (Dobash, 1986:24).

<sup>21</sup> Through history, within the more hierarchical model of crime and punishment, the ruling classes, or the person or body with whom or with which power rested, defined crime and devised punishment as was deemed appropriate within the power investiture. This model of crime and punishment was supported in the early and mid centuries of the last millennium by the *Theatre of Terror*, the *amende honorable*, and the *Bloody Code* (capital punishment), instruments of the ruling classes, or elites, employed by them to secure their positions and their assets. Ignatieff (1978: 16), details some of the offences deemed capital offences by the elites of the 1600 and 1700's as highway robbery, housebreaking, beast stealing, grand larceny, murder and arson. Ignatieff explains how new statutes of this era, for example the Riot Act, made offences capital that had long been subject to lesser penalties. Stealing hedges, underwood, fruit from trees and timber, damaging orchards, or woodland, taking fish from ponds became, according to Ignatieff, criminal acts, criminalised through the Black Act. 'The Black Act was enacted to make possible the conviction of the small farmers and tenants who were waging a guerrilla-style resistance to the encroachment upon their customary forest rights by



The analyses of earlier theoretical representations of female criminality, among them Lombroso and Ferrero (1958 Edition), Pollak (1961) and Thomas (1967), established a gendered concept of female criminality. Female criminality was analysed and represented as deviant femininity; the discourse generally was one of biologism. Women who engaged in crime and criminal activity were unnatural, lacking in female or maternal instincts and characteristics. Women were generally represented as being psychologically unbalanced; they were socially, psychologically and economically dependent; they were innocent and defenceless in the world as children are innocent and defenceless in the world. The criminal woman was deemed to possess all the criminal characteristics of the criminal male and the worst characteristics of women, cunning, spite and deceitfulness; they were deemed to be more male than female. While for men, criminality was deemed in earlier studies to be part of their natural characteristics and deemed in later studies a product of their socialisation, criminality in females was deemed unnatural and it was evidenced in maleness and masculinity. In the earliest work, an 1800's classic of criminal biology, Lombroso and Ferrero studied the skull, brains and facial and bodily 'anomalies' including tattooing of female criminals in an attempt to establish criminal types, categories of deviants. Their lengthy examination of the crimes of women consistently highlighted the gendered nature of female criminality. The crimes that women engaged in were crimes prompted by their female role. Women committed infanticide, aborting or killing their babies, or women

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nouveaux riches estate holders and royal foresters in the woodlands of Hampshire and Berkshire (Ignatieff: 1978: 16). Ignatieff (1978: 17), outlines how the first forty years of the 18th century witnessed a proliferation of new forgery and counterfeiting statutes. These statutes, Ignatieff says, may be explained as 'an attempt by banking and commercial interests to secure protection for the new systems of paper credit and exchange created in response to the rise of a national market'. According to Ignatieff (p. 17), two thirds of those convicted of forgery throughout the 1800's were executed. Ignatieff (p. 17), explains how, after taking the unusual decision to hang a man in chains, 'the justices admitted that they had been urged to do so by "very many respectable Gentlemen and Merchants in and about Halifax and Rochdale, who felt that such a notorious and public example" would deter others from making counterfeit coin'. Dobash et al (1986: 29), state that by the end of the eighteenth century over 200 offences were capital offences in Britain (see also Philips, in Cohen and Scull, 1983: 54). According to Philips, most of these 200 offences were property offences but the enforcement of these laws was arbitrary and erratic and prosecution was 'haphazard'. However haphazard, the spectacle and terror of the *amende honorable* and the *Bloody Code* were employed by the powerful to impress their power upon those subject to it. In a similar fashion, the prosecutions during these years of social theorists and pamphleteers such as the Jacobins, the Chartists, and religious such as the Quakers, and later the Fabians and the suffragettes, the suspension from time to time of civil rights and habeas corpus, document a justice system defined by the powerful to protect their power base.

committed crimes against property, stealing or begging for sustenance or adornment.

In their consideration of the under-representation of women in crime statistics, Ferrero and Lombroso (1959 Ed: 104), noted the conservative tendency of women, the cause of which they located in the immobility of the ovule compared with the activity of the sperm (1959: 109), a theory in common with Freud and his grounding of women in biologism and sexual passivity (Klein: 1977: 17), and synonymous with Thomas's<sup>22</sup> catabolic male's outward flowing creative energy and anabolic female's storing energy, motionless and conservative (Smart: 1978: 38). Pollak (1950: 11), highlighted the checking of natural aggression in girls, the passive role of women in establishing relationships, the fact that a woman's economic and social future was dependent upon securing a male she could not be seen to be pursuing, one she could not freely pursue, as social mores engendering deceit in females<sup>23</sup>. Pollak's Freudian loyalties are evident (1950: 127), in his description of young women's experiences of menstruation as:

**'a narcissistic wound to their self-esteem. Setting the seal so to speak upon their womanhood, it destroys their hope ever to become a man, which until then they may have preserved, and intensifies any feeling of inferiority which they may have had about their sex'.**

Pollak discussed (1950: 128), the psychological imbalance wrought in women by menstruation and women's claim to special consideration because of it. He

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas (1907: 312-313), discusses the widely acknowledged and widely accepted concept of woman's superior cunning, which he contrasts with the openness and directness of males, he draws an analogy between cunning and constructive thought positing that due to the limited and personal nature of female activities this 'trait has expressed itself historically in womankind as intrigue rather than invention'. Thomas (1907: 238), responds to charges that women have no characters at all, by stating that women's life experiences have equipped them rather to accommodating the personalities of men than to dealing with the solid realities of the world. Thomas finds that modesty imprisons women as the patriarchal system imprisons women, through exclusion and marginalisation; he (1907: 291), outlines how woman lives in the white man's world of practical and scientific activity but is excluded through biology, through history and through patriarchy, although this is not the word he uses it is the sentiment he expresses, and he discusses (1907: 294), man's contempt for woman's degradation in her exclusion from owning or developing property and her objectification in her treatment as property (1907: 297), and man's superstition of women, the fear of contamination by woman's weakness, he outlines how 'chivalry, chaperonage and modern convention are the persistence of the old race habit of contempt for women and their intellectual sequestration' (1907: 301) and he writes of modesty (1907: 302), restraining her, guarding her from freedom in her 'unfreedom' (1907: 303).

<sup>23</sup> Kingsley Davis (1937:746, see also Millman: 1982: 337), in his analysis of prostitution, stated that the social behaviour of women in general, including women's behaviour in terms of marriage, may be defined 'simply as the use

hypothesised (1950), that female crime was underreported and under detected and when detected and reported, treated more leniently, that culturally men are protective of women and this cultural norm impacts on the treatment of female criminality and thus on female crime statistics. Cowie, Cowie and Slater (1968: 165), found the position Pollak assumed in relation to female offenders to be uniquely his own. They outlined the universal agreement among criminologists that women commit far less crime than men and that they are underrepresented in official crime statistics which reflect the extent to which crime presents as a serious problem for society because they 'cause much less wilful damage to society than men do'. Bishop's (1931), work on women and crime is notably on two counts, his denouncement of feminism (1931: 272-276), and his conviction of the accountability of the female sex for the increase in crime in the 1920's (1931: 288). The latter he explains in terms of the former, outlining his belief that the feminist 'is engaged in unsettling the women of the nation with disastrous results' (1931: 272). Crites (1977), tested three propositions: that the women's movement contributes to increased female criminality; that female criminality is increasingly violent and aggressive; and that female offenders continue to benefit from the paternalism of the judiciary; and she found none of them to be substantiated.

The common denominator in the earlier works on female criminality was their propensity to look to the individual characteristics of offenders, characteristics believed to be inherently female, dishonesty, promiscuity and insanity, for the aetiology of female crime. The feminist critique of such representations of female criminals and female criminality emerged in the 1970's. These works challenged the moralistic underpinnings of the representations of the deviancies and delinquencies of criminal women of earlier works.

Smart (1976), and Carlen (1985), in their respective critiques of the work of Lombroso and Ferrero (1959 Ed.), Pollak (1950) and Thomas (1967), find

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of sexual responses for ulterior motives'. Within marriage women, according to Davis, trade sexual favours for an

misogynous themes throughout. Dorrie Klein (1977), in her aetiology of female crime concluded that gender and sexuality are fundamental to the definition and categorisation of female crime. Heidensohn (1985: 17), wrote of folk myths about the inherent nature of women and Carlen (1985: 1), of the 'misogynous mythology' that permeated through the ages women's experiences of social control. Smart (1976), attacked criminology's lack of interest in female criminality; the widespread acceptance of sexual stereotyping in female criminality; the cultural stereotypes and the ideologically informed explanations of female deviance (see also Heidensohn: 1968); and indeed the anti-feminist ideology which she found in the work on female criminality. Carlen (1985: 2) in her critique (see also Horn: 1995: 109-128), finds women who commit crimes depicted as cunning and evil, not only offending against society but against their true nature. Smart's critique (1976: 41), of the solutions proposed to the problems of deviance was that they were centred on the modification of individual perceptions of their situations, rather than 'making structural changes to the social order'. Carlen highlighted (1985: 4), the fact that these theories ignored the economic and cultural factors and the class system which forced many women into deviant sexual behaviour and criminality. Carlen stated (1985: 3), that Lombroso and Ferrero's 18<sup>th</sup> century theory of female penology persists, 'constituting women criminals as being both within and without femininity, criminality, adulthood and sanity', and manifesting itself in the misogyny of judges and prison administrators.

#### **2.4 Contemporary Representations of Criminal Women**

Fennel (1993: 182), outlined how the Irish legal system, partisan in nature, is informed by stereotypical assumptions and myths with regard to male and female roles, which she says, operate to disproportionately disadvantage women: 'Currently woman's treatment by the criminal justice system is dependent upon the extent to which she conforms or fails to conform to her

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economic and social status supplied by men.

perceived appropriate role'. Fennel's assertion supports research conducted by Lyons and Hunt (1988: 129-142), into the effects of gender on sentencing in Dublin. Lyons and Hunt describe how most research points to the concepts of chivalry (see Chesney-Lind: 1973, Heidensohn: 1975: 46, Simon: 1975: 47, Klein: 1977: 23, Bowker: 1978: 218, and Cain 1990, see Worrall: 1989: 79 for an exploration of the 'gender contract'), and male paternalism (see Young, 1993: 55-68, for an exploration of femininity before the courts), to explain the more lenient treatment of women by the criminal justice system (see Young: 1993, and see Weinstein: 1996, for a plea for legal systems to take gender inequalities into account).

Worrall (1981: 90), describe how the majority of female offenders are not seen as real criminals and are therefore treated more leniently than men before the courts. Women are more likely to be sentenced with a view to their personal circumstances than simply in terms of the offence they have committed. Provided a woman is prepared to play the part, the stereotypical female role, she will convince the court that she is out of place there (Worrall: 1981: 91, Hutter and Williams: 1981, Edwards: 1985: 135 and 149, and Kennedy: 1993). If this strategy cannot be adopted, one of psychiatric disturbance is utilised (1981: 92), see Luckhaus (1985: 159-182), for a study of pre-menstrual tension as a successful plea against incarceration. In the interests of 'taking female crime seriously', Worrall (1981: 93), while acknowledging the possible drawbacks for individual women, calls for these myths to be challenged, (see also Morrissey: 2003). She states (1989: 79), that such stratagems serve to render female offenders invisible, that the gender contract permits the female offender's life to be presented or represented in terms of its domestic, sexual and pathological dimensions.

In opposition to this representation of criminal women is the concept of the 'evil woman'. This representation results in harsher treatment of women before the courts, not only for the crime committed, but for exceeding the bounds of

gender appropriate behaviour (Lyons and Hunt: 1988: 131). Lyons and Hunt concluded (1988: 138), that women before the courts receive lenient sentences for traditional female-type offences such as petty theft, and they receive harsh sentences for non-traditional type offences such as assault. This argument was supported by Bacik<sup>24</sup> (2002: 145), who wrote that Irish District Court judges were found to place more weight on factors such as marital status, family background and parenthood in sentencing women.

Chesney-Lind (1973), explored judicial enforcement of the female sex role and she challenged the chivalrous view of the judiciary's treatment of female offenders with the contention that the judiciary in fact sanctioned more severely female adolescents than their male counterparts (1973: 52). To support this contention Chesney-Lind pointed to gynaecological exams to which adolescent women were subjected, even when charged with non-sexual offences. In addition to this, she pointed to the increased likelihood of female offenders being sent to pre-trial detention (1973: 56, 1978: 210). Lengthy detentions were used to thoroughly examine the women and their delinquent propensities, the greatest approbation being reserved for girls deemed immoral or incorrigible<sup>25</sup>; she writes of young women violating their sex role rather than the law (1978: 174).

Chesney-Lind supported the chivalry hypothesis in that she found (1978: 179, see also Simon: 1975: 109), that the police were less likely to arrest a young woman than a young man as long as she behaved in stereotypical ways and the offence was not a sexual offence. She found that judicial paternalism resulted in custodial sentences for young women deemed sexually delinquent (1978: 185).

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<sup>24</sup> 'In 1996 a total of 5,202 persons were convicted of indictable offences in Ireland, of these only 476, or less than 10% were women. In 1998, 4,281 indictable convictions were recorded, and women accounted for 553 (12.9%)....From an overall total of 2,341 convictions for indictable offences in 1999, women offenders accounted for 309 (13%), and their convictions were overwhelmingly for crimes against property...9% of those convicted of drugs offences. However women make up only 3% of the Irish prison population, indicating that even when convicted, women are less likely to go to prison than men (Bacik: 2002: 135-136). In a study of Dublin District Court sentencing practice, Bacik et al (1998) found that a 'significantly higher proportion of women received no conviction (62.8% of women as against only 42.8% of men); while only 14.6% of women defendants were sentenced to prison, as against 29% of male offenders (Bacik: 2002: 145). The comparison is made between sentencing practices not between recorded offences.

She concluded however, that the chivalry hypothesis was in fact 'the product of the fact that women have less serious offences' (see also Heidensohn: 1989: 22). Heidensohn (1975: 46), explained the small numbers of women in prison using two phenomena: the trivial size and personal nature of the thefts carried out by women (see also Rowett and Vaughan: 1981: 131), and the informal controls exerted upon women. She pointed to early socialisation and its rewards for conformation, communities and their agents of control, and lengthy remands imposed upon women in order to give the judiciary time to amass reports on the female offenders who then frequently 'punished' women more. Carlen (1988: 9), highlighted Seear's and Player's (1986), analysis of official statistics which indicated that there was considerable evidence to support the thesis that at least some women are treated more leniently by the criminal justice system<sup>26</sup>. According to Carlen (1988: 10), these women are women living more conventional lives. Unregulated women, single women, de-gender controlled women, unemployed women, homeless women are, she holds, more likely to be sentenced to imprisonment. Lyons and Hunt (1988), state that the main pattern of female criminality is influenced by the position and role of women in patriarchal society.

## 2.5 Prison Space

*Panopticon* is the title given by Jeremy Bentham to a sketch he made in 1791 of a penitentiary<sup>27</sup> (Evans: 1971, Rothman: 1971, Johnston: 1973, Foucault: 1977,

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<sup>25</sup> Pat Carlen (1987: 126) describes the 'status' offences of girls in residential Care in the UK in the early 1980's among them running away from home, and staying out late at night.

<sup>26</sup> In general the policy driven studies undertaken in the UK, Morris (1933), National Council for Civil Liberties (1986), Seear and Player (1987), Casale (1989), Prison Reform Trust (1995), Home Office (1997), Loucks and Spencer (1997), the Home Office Study 170 (1999), Home Office (2000), Prison Reform Trust (2000), were for the most part undertaken to inform policy and policy makers in female imprisonment. The issues highlighted, from the Seear and Player study (1987), through the Home Office Study (1999), are the low but rising numbers of women in prison; the issues of substance abuse, suicide and self-injury among women in prison; the high rates of mental disorder and personality disorder among women in prison; the effect of sentencing women on families and the wider community; the fact that gender and racial stereotypes were still influencing the decisions of magistrates; and the fact that women before the courts were more likely to be defined as troubled rather than troublesome.

<sup>27</sup> Use of imprisonment has been traced back to Roman times, to the Mamertine Prison begun in 640 BC by Ancus Martius (Johnston: 1973: 5) and to the acoustics of the dungeon at Syracuse where Dionysius I amused himself listening to the conversations of his prisoners (Evans: 1971: 26). Many writers (Evans: 1971; Johnston: 1973, Foucault: 1977, Ignatieff: 1978, Dobash et al: 1986, Cohen and Scull: 1983, Mathiesen: 1990, etc.), outlined medieval places of detention, fortresses, castles, watchtowers, the abutments of bridges, town gates, cellars of municipal buildings and private dwellings. Prisons were used to coerce payment of debts, as chambers of torture, as a prelude to execution,

Ignatieff, 1978, Markus: 1982, Smart: 1989, Dobash et al, 1986, Jackson, 1993, Ainley: 1998: 88-100, Haggerty and Ericson: 2000, etc.). *Panopticon*, as designed by Bentham, is the radial style prison designed for maximum observation, an instrument of total control through surveillance. In Bentham's vision of the penitentiary, control was wrought through rendering space visible, the experience of prison space was the essence of the experience of imprisonment. Punishment was present within the very architecture of the prison. 'Bentham placed both prisoner and guard alike under the constant surveillance of an inspector' (Ignatieff: 1978: 77): where the prisoner was in a space not visible (she/)he was 'to be buried in a solitude where (she/)he had no companion but reflection, no counsellor but thought...' (Ignatieff: 1978: 78). Thus the space the prisoner occupied in Panopticon was a space of solitude and of torment, through simultaneously intensely personal yet mechanistic and relentless control.

Prisons, whether systems-based or treatment-based, attempt the construction of separate worlds; prison is in effect 'the creation and manipulation of a total universe' (Evans: 1971: 26). The individual is incarcerated in this total universe, this separate world with its separate space and its separate use of space. Sim emphasises (1991: 9, see also Foucault: 1977: 143-154, and Garland and Young: 1983: 15), the control within prison that manifests itself around cellular spaces and routines and timetables. Within prison, space takes the place of matter, where there were obligations, commitments, employments and relationships, now there is time and space. Giddens, according to Lash and Urry (1994: 230), placed the analysis of time and space at the heart of contemporary social theory.

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banishment or transportation, or used in lieu of these penalties for privileged individuals. There are a myriad of prison designs, possible prisons and possibilities for imprisonment: ecclesiastical prisons, civil prisons and military prisons (Johnston: 1973: 9); island prisons, such as Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated, Sakhalin in Russia where Anton Chekov conducted his prison research (Chekov: 1967 Ed.), and Ireland's prison island, Spike Island in Cork; citadel prisons such as Mont St. Michel in France; plantation prisons like Angola and Cummins Farm, prisons of the cotton plantations of the southern American states (Parenti: 2000: 164); colonial prisons, the plantations of Maryland and Virginia, the West Indies, Australia and Van Deiman's Land; floating prisons such as the 'hulks', the superannuated warships used in the UK (Ignatieff: 1978: 80); and even conjugal prisons, as described by Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), in her novel *Castle Rackrent*, (1964: 30 and 125)(see footnote 19 page 29).



**'Humans live in time and with the knowledge of passing time, humans grasp their time-experience sub-consciously as well as consciously and the movement of individuals through time and space is grasped through the interpenetration of presence and absence'.  
(Lash and Urry: 1994: 230)**

Both time and space are the apparent fundamental elements of the experience of imprisonment. The punishment that is imprisonment is the confinement of the individual within a small specified controlled space for a prescribed period of time. The state defines time for the imprisoned individual: time beyond its judicial carceral signification ceases to exist for the individual incarcerated in prison space, beyond the prisoner's abstract sense of real time/prison time, and it is prison space that becomes the critical dimension of the prison experience. Within prison, when time has been judicially defined, 'being' happens entirely within prison space.

Bachelard's essence of being is expressed in terms of space (1969). Massey (1994: 154), observed that, in its broadest formulation, society is constructed spatially. Ardener (1993: 19), suggests that women and men experience the world differently, that they individually and collectively live in different worlds. Men and women occupy space differently (see also Smart (1989) on the separate social worlds of women). Grosz (1995: 123), posits that men occupy space as territory to map and explore while women occupy space as place, as occupation, as living, women and dwelling, *chora*<sup>28</sup> (see also Rose: 1993: 95 and Ardener: 1993: 23). Bartky (1990: 67), discusses women's experiences of enclosure and confinement within space. Rose (1993: 143-146, see also Rose 1995), considers women and space and the confinement of women within space, the space available to women as constricted. It is suggested in the literature that women are conditioned, by our culture, our society, by our relationships and by our own self-policing, our relentless self-surveillance, to take up as little space as possible (Bordo: 1993, Orbach: 1993, Faludi: 1991, Wolf: 1991, Ardener: 1993, Rose: 1993, Urla and Swedlund: 1995, Hanson and

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<sup>28</sup> 'The space in which place is made possible...the space that engenders without possessing, that nurtures without requirements of its own, that receives without giving and that gives without receiving (Grosz: 1995: 116).

Pratt: 1995, Ainley: 1998). Rose (1993), contends that spatial location for women is about vulnerability. She says that women sense space to be a hazardous arena, something tricky, something to be negotiated. Irigaray (1993: 7), wrote of space as containers, envelopes of identity.

Goffman (1963: 104), held a person's world to be divided up spatially by their identities. Our identities dictate where we may go, where we will be permitted or accepted and where we are threaten by our identities. De Certeau et al (1998: 9), hold that cultural practices are the elements of everyday life (De Certeau: 1984), decisive for the identity of an individual within a group because they allow the individual to 'take up his or her social position' within the group (see also Giddens: 1984: 85<sup>29</sup>, and Lash and Urry: 1994: 231, see Giallombardo: 1966, for a study of group culture in a women's prison). Individuals have degrees of freedom and make decisions within the scope of that freedom and within the confines of habit, Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'<sup>30</sup> (1990). The routines of routinised everyday lives are vital components of ontological security.

Adopting de Certeau et al (1998: 11), in the construction of the separate world of the prison, for prisoners the neighbourhood of the prison is an outgrowth of the prisoners' rooms. For the imprisoned individual the neighbourhood of the prison amounts to the sum of all trajectories initiated from the prisoner's room. De Certeau et al (1998: 12), write of the inscription of the neighbourhood in the history of the subject as a mark of indelible belonging. Lash and Urry quote Irigaray (1993: 239), who said that there is no need for us to remember, our bodies remember for us. Bachelard (1969: 10), writes of the spaces of our past moments of solitude remaining indelibly within us. Both Bachelard (1969: 5) and de Certeau (1998: 148), discuss the journeying with us of our successive living spaces, 'we bring our lares with us' and 'we leave them without leaving

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<sup>29</sup> 'Positioning... to be understood in relation to the seriality of encounters across time-space. Every individual is at once positioned in the flow of day-to-day life... in her/his life span...in 'institutional time....and in multiple ways within social relations' (Giddens: 1986: introduction).

them'. Bachelard writes of the liaison our bodies make with unforgettable houses (1969: 15) and of how our houses live on in us (1969: 56).

There is within space the capacity to shelter and Bachelard (1969: 91), describes the feeling of shelter, the feeling of well-being generated by retreat: the sense of refuge, the covering, the huddling, the hiding, the snug concealing, the primitiveness of refuge, its animality. Baudrillard (1996: 16), writes of the houses of our childhood and their depth and resonance in memory. He relates this to the complex structure of interiority, to notions of inside and outside (1996: 16). He writes of objects within space as symbolisations. He writes of the emotional value of objects, of their 'presence', of objects becoming spatial incarnations of emotional bonds (1996: 16). Social space, according to Lefebvre (1991) is related to three general concepts, form, structure, and function. He writes (1991: 141-142), that space is marked by signs, either abstractly or by means of discourse, through which it acquires its symbolic value. Space, he says, does indeed speak.

Discourses and representations of women in prison are structured in large part through or by the space the women as prisoners occupy, the *architecture parlante*, of the penal institutions, their signs symbols and rituals and their narratives and discourses, the gazes of the female prison. Heidensohn (1975), considered the 'special' approach to women's imprisonment which emerged from the work of Elizabeth Fry in the 1800's. Heidensohn suggests that Fry's sexually segregated system and female regime differed from male prisons only in detail (1975: 43). She said that 'despite gallons of pastel paint and.... flowery curtains over windows the effects of the old institutions remain' (1975: 44). Both Bowker (1978: 208) and Chesney-Lind (1991: 58), remark that 'women were an afterthought in the construction of a jail that was built primarily to hold men'. Carlen has written extensively on the dreadfully deleterious effects of prison experiences on women. She wrote (1987: 149), of young women

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<sup>30</sup> 'Patterns of perception, thought and action which are constitutive of what I call the habitus' (Bourdieu: 1990)

absconding from Care in order to escape the 'muzzle', the effect of incarceration and isolation, a word evocative of the concept and experience of the medieval scold's bridle (see this chapter: footnote 18: page 28). She considers (1990), among other issues, the developing punitive rhetoric of the UK, and the effect of prison sentences<sup>31</sup> on poor women, on isolated women, on depressed women, prison sentences with their implicit downward spirals of poverty, isolation and depression, 'the snowballing effects of imprisonment...felt long after release'.

## 2.6 Penal Gazes

Within the space of the traditional Panopticon prison the individual was caught in the gaze of the institution. Within the modern prison the individual is subject to various gazes. The technology of the modern prison produces a Foucauldian panopticism rather than a Benthamite panopticism. Within Foucauldian panopticism there is a subtle power in all disciplining institutions and it is designed to produce, by acting on individual subjectivities, docile bodies. Bourdieu (2001: 65), writes that the gaze is more than a simple universal and abstract power to objectify, rather he says it is a symbolic power dependant upon relative positions and evaluative schemes understood by the person to whom they are applied. Berger (1972: 8-9), states that 'the way we see things is affected by what we know and what we believe'. He says that we never look at things in isolation but always in light of the way the object of our gaze relates to us. The 'gaze' serves in modern society as a weapon for effective control through surveillance.

For Foucault (1977), power is based on detailed knowledge, we are controlled by discourses used to observe and define us. He refers (2001: 70), to the threefold aspects of surveillant panopticism as supervision, control and

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<sup>31</sup> The biographical and autobiographical works such as Peckham, (1985), Evans (1986), Gregory (2003), and Wyner (2003), give insight into individual experiences of various female prisons and they evidence the inability of the female prison to accomplish much that might be considered positive in the lives of those women.

corrections. Bartky (1993: 227) agrees that panopticism is a form of surveillance, a discipline which 'encourages us to watch ourselves because we imagine ourselves observed by others'. Bartky believes that modern women have become like the inmates of Panopticon, policed subjects subjected to relentless surveillance. However the modern woman is unlike the inmates of Panopticon, again according to Bartky, in that she is self-policing and 'self committed to a relentless self-surveillance'. Rose (1993: 143-146), considers women's self-consciousness, women watching themselves being watched and judged, women's experiences of surveillance. Within a feminist theory of imprisonment, panopticism, relentless self-surveillance, and the ubiquitous 'male gaze' with its evaluative function, may be combined with a female surveillant and evaluative gaze and the judicial, structural and electronic surveillance endured by imprisoned women. Notwithstanding the political and structural surveillance all imprisoned women suffer, some must also endure pervasive media surveillance. Women in prison space exist under a networked regime of constant surveillance, 'perpetual surveillance' (Sim: 1996 (b): 121), the superpanopticon of the surveillant assemblage (Haggerty and Ericson: 2000: 607), the great pyramid of gazes (Foucault: 2001: 73).

**2.6(i) Media Gaze:** The issue in terms of media gaze is how, in the media, deviant feminine subjectivities are constructed and represented, and to what effect. The media is a major instrument of social control (Cohen and Young: 1973: 12), and is in the business of manufacturing and reproducing images of the social world for commercial ends. Media representations of imprisoned women impact on our understanding of what it is to be a woman, of what the feminine is, and of what it means to be a woman prisoner, a woman in prison. As Fiske said (1982: 171), 'when signs make myths and values public, they enable them to perform their function of cultural identification'. It is for this reason that such representations should be examined (see Fiske: 1989). In the literature many authors have taken exception of the manner in which the modern media constructs and represents the feminine, among them Dworkin

(1981, 1987), McRobbie (1982), MacKinnon (1994), Van Zoonen (1994), and Morrissey (2003). The issue is the problematic representations of the feminine presented. Particularly problematic is the discursive subject positioning of the female criminal and/or female prisoner, the manner and means of the construction and presentation of media images of these women, the subsequent mass public consumption of those images, and the ultimate passing of the images into public consciousness.

There are, broadly speaking, three socially constructed discourses of crime, official, media, and public discourses (Cohen and Young: 1973). Public discourses of crime, according to Cohen and Young (1973: 29), are constructed by a lay public with little 'expert' knowledge of crime. The public is, they suggest, 'massively dependent' for their conceptions and perceptions of crime and criminality on media and official discourses. The media has the means and the mandate to mediate the social to the public. They work in partnership with the public. They cannot exist without a public willing to purchase and consume their product. The media serve their markets and must, to survive, provide their markets with consonant images of society. It is in this way that the media 'constructs' reality.

This media constructed reality, according to Cohen and Young (1973:27), is not a new reality, but a reflection of reality as it has already been 'pre-constituted by the powerful'. It is in this way that the media serves as an institution of major ideological significance for the maintenance of the status quo in society. As Hall explained (Hall in Cohen and Young: 1973: 231), there are two aspects to the signification of news, the first is news value, the second is ideological significance. Hall (in Hall et al: 1978, see also Hall and Jefferson: 2000: 75-79), argues that the media's basic model of society is one of a democratic consensus. This democratic consensus legitimises particular social economic political and moral perspectives on society. The model precludes the media from selecting stories for publication opposing or contradicting the consensus.

In fact, in order to maintain consensus the media defuse challenges to it. They do this by representing such challenges as meaningless or senseless, as misunderstandings of society rather than alternative interpretations of society. Media discourse necessarily incorporates official and public discourses. There is, as Morrissey details, (2003: 19), a symbiotic relationship between the media and mainstream legal institutions. This is evident in, she suggests, the manner in which the media generally faithfully report the criminal narratives of criminalised individuals of the criminal courts.

The media select, from the vast array of information available, the information they present. Through this presentation of selected information the media provide us with guiding myths which shape our sense of our world. In terms of accuracy in reportage, there is much evidence that the media 'consistently get things wrong' (Cohen and Young: 1973: 21) and report less than factual accounts of issues or events. Indeed their accounts can be fictional, often even mythical (Cohen and Young: 1973: 21, Van Zoonen: 1994: 37, Morrissey: 2003: 25). Van Zoonen (1994: 37), considers the content of myth in the familiar formulaic narratives of the media, which, she says, resemble mythic story telling. She considers the ritual view of communication which focuses on the construction of community through rituals, shared histories, beliefs and values. Fiske and Hartley (1978), referred to this as the bardic tradition in communication.

Morrissey (2003: 14-20), outlines the media's process of constructing narratives. Narrative, she writes, is the staple of the news media. Every item in the news is termed a story. Journalists construct or reconstruct events using narrational techniques, such as dramatisation and personalisation. Characters in the narratives are subjectified through the principles of story-telling. The story-telling the media engages in is limited to a number of stock tales or narratives arising from popular stories or myths. One of the most common of these stock narratives is that of the morality play. This play places the forces of good,

generally the state, its institutions, and 'good' people, on one side, and the forces of evil, the character(s) of the narrative, in the case of crime reporting generally individual criminals, 'bad' people, on the other. The media, in mediating the event, within the imperatives of limited time and space, reduces and simplifies often complex stories to easily understood easily judged tales. Within this process, individual subjectivities can become stereotyped, victimised, even mythified. Through the process, the media provides images and narratives which construct, shape and record the order of things, the order of culture.

The media reflect society's dominant social values. In Western societies generally, there has been a tendency to dichotomise women into good girl and bad girl categories. Morrissey details (2003: 16), that while male behaviour is seen to exist on a continuum, good to bad, female behaviour is polarised, either good or bad. Women are saints or sinners. This dichotomisation of female behaviour lends itself readily to the simplicity of media narrational techniques and their stock narratives. In her work, Heidensohn (1985), considered media stereotypes of female criminals, among them the witch, the whore and the bewildered mother. Cohen's (1972), media amplification spiral, referred to by Growchewski (2002: 339), as the media's signification spiral, is a process by which issues and events are vested in an escalating manner with public significance. It is useful in describing the manner in which media images of deviant women are juxtaposed with images of 'shocked middle aged women' and 'sincere housewives' and the general moral panic 'concerning female criminality and the assertive, aggressive nature of liberated women'. Smith (1997: 133-147), considered the 'unnatural' representation in the media of women killers, Myra Hindley and Rose West. In the media, Rose West was represented as the Black Widow drawn into a pact of friendship with fellow serial killer Myra Hindley, the White Devil (Smith: 1997: 133-134). While Morrissey (2003), studied, among others, the case of Aileen Wuornos,



represented in the media as 'the world's first female serial killer', and the case of Tracey Wiggington represented as 'the notorious lesbian vampire killer'.

We can only make sense of ourselves and our experiences within the limits of the meaning systems available to us. An Althusarian perspective would interpret this as the construction of individual subjectivities through interpellation by ideology<sup>32</sup>. Van Zoonen (1994: 24), outlines the view that the interpellation of women in pornography, for example, fixes women within patriarchal ideology as objects of the male gaze, and perpetuates the objectification of women and perspectives of women as available objects for men's domination. McRobbie (1982), in her study of gendered resistances to dominant cultures, the gendered subversion of hegemony, found that such opposition was more difficult for the feminine than the masculine, primarily because of the limited sphere of the feminine, the fact that the feminine is primarily confined to the private sphere. McRobbie in her analysis of *Jackie* magazine (1982), found an articulation of capitalist and patriarchal ideologies. She found four codes of connotation. They were the codes of romance, of personal/domestic life, of fashion and beauty, and of pop music. She found that through these codes, readers were encouraged to engage in the personal. Throughout the magazine the emphasis was on the personal life. The readers' interests were emphatically in the private sphere. They were hailed as heterosexual. Above all, they were to get and keep a man. To this end, they were constantly and consistently engaged in programmes of self-improvement, programmes focused on fashion, cosmetics, diet and beauty. In even the fourth code, that of pop music, McRobbie found that instead of being encouraged to engage with or create music, readers were encouraged, through picture poster presentations of male musicians, to fantasize about heterosexual romance. The medium, *Jackie* magazine, was found to be a mechanism of social control, steeped as it was in the communication of stereotypical, patriarchal and hegemonic values about the female and the feminine.

In Ireland McCullagh (1995), wrote about the myth of the media, the media's self image as a window on society, providing a faithful reflection of what is going on in society. He presented two Irish media myths, the so-called Bugsy Malone crime wave of 1977/78, an epidemic of juvenile crime, and the joyriding of 1985, and the ensuing moral panics. McCullagh found that sensational coverage of crime in the media generated anxiety which at times, because of the nature of the coverage, develops into fear and hysteria (see also Fennel: 1993: pages 27-29, O'Connell: 1999, and O'Donnell and O'Sullivan: 2001 and, in particular, pages 31-32). O'Connell (1999), argued that, despite relatively low crime rates, the Irish public believed itself to be experiencing a law and order crisis. This he held was due to the nature of media crime coverage in Ireland. He found that there were four ways in which the press skews the representation of crime: bias towards extreme and atypical offences; bias towards those extreme offences in terms of newspaper space; bias towards stories involving vulnerable victims and invulnerable offences; and bias towards pessimistic accounts of the criminal justice system generally. Horgan (1999), highlighted a major trend in the media towards the sensationalisation of court proceedings. He suggested that the coverage was legal but unfair and he concluded that there is a temptation in the press in Ireland to treat the administration of justice as an extension of the entertainment industry.

McCullagh (1995), highlighted the reliance of members of the Government on the media for access to the public mood and he outlined the manner in which the media impacts upon policy decisions and the way in which media coverage can generate an atmosphere in which controversial policy decisions can become commonsensical. McCullagh (1995), found no counter images to the hegemonic images of the dominant discourses. Indeed O'Connor (1990), in her work highlighted the role of the media in Ireland in reinforcing and reproducing values rather than radically altering them. The images McCullagh searched for and did not find were images of joy riders, for example, as young people

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<sup>32</sup> Althusser defined interpellation as the process through which 'individuals are compelled to identify with the

bearing the brunt of a recession, or of young people reacting to increasingly heavy policing of working class areas. He did find that where the media were prepared to interpret attacks on the Royal Ulster Constabulary, (the RUC), the police force of Northern Ireland at the time, politically, they would not do so in the case of attacks on the Garda (the police force in the Republic of Ireland).

The power of the media and the traditional power of the print media, the press, in particular in Ireland in shaping Ireland's culture and Irish society signals the primary role of the press in shaping the construct that is woman in Ireland. The press has a major role in the development of penal policy through its influence on public opinion and its influence on ministerial and government departmental opinion. These opinions, influenced as they are by the press, in turn shape the penal policy which orders and controls imprisonment experiences. The press, within Hall's discursive democratic consensus (see page 43), helps shape the Irish public's perception of the women's prison and the women imprisoned within it. Representations of women in prison in the press help shape women's experiences of imprisonment. Women's experiences of imprisonment shape imprisoned women's constructions of their personal identities and their senses of self. The discursive subject positioning in the press of the female criminal and the female prisoner works transdiscursively or intertextually in media, official, public and private discourses to produce the narrated and performed subjectivities of the Irish female prisoner.

**2.6(ii) Expert Gaze:** In prison, the expert gaze represents the state in structuring, ordering and controlling prisoners. Foucault (2001: 85), discusses the 'microcourt, the permanent petty tribunal' of prison officers and Governors, from morning to night judging and punishing prisoners. He outlines (1977: 30), how the prison's technology of the soul, the educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists, fail to conceal the instrument and vector of power that is the prison, a whole technology of power over the body. He explores (1977: 184),

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representations which their culture supplies' (in Silverman: 1983), see also Fairclough (1995: 73-77).

the 'normalising gaze' (see also Garland: 1992), where surveillance and normalisation became the great instruments of power in the 1800's and comments (1977: 299), that 'the harshest prison says to the prisoners I shall note the slightest irregularity in your conduct'.

Pollack (1984: 84), outlines the informal agreement among prison officers that female offenders are more difficult to work with than male offenders. Women are said to be more emotional, more prone to anger outbursts, more likely to engage in verbal assaults on staff. Women 'have a shorter fuse', are more hysterical, less in control (Pollack: 1984: 86-87, Genders and Player: 1987: 162). Dobash et al (1995: 8), contended that men are deemed bad and normal needing legal punishment while women are deemed mad and abnormal needing a welfare/treatment model. Ussher states (1991: 10), that 'men are positioned within criminal discourse while women are positioned within psychiatric discourse'. Heidensohn states (1975: 52), that 'women offenders were seen as sick and in need of treatment'. Hutter and Williams state (1981: 21), that women offenders are represented as 'sick rather than sinful'.

Sim (1991), developed an analysis of the experiences of female prisoners in England between 1774 and 1989 of medical power in prisons and in his work on the professional dimension of women's historic experiences of imprisonment he states (1991: 129), that the female experience of regulation, discipline and normalisation was quite distinct from the male experience. He said that returning women to their normal roles warranted a degree of intervention and surveillance which was much more intense than the experience of men<sup>33</sup> (see also Garland and Young: 1983: 23, Sim: 1991 (b): 120, see also Zwerman: 1988: 31-47, for an exploration of the 'special incapacitation' used with female political prisoners). Women were judged to need not only

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<sup>33</sup> 'The founding of institutions like Albion...extended the mantle of state control...and made it possible to punish (or 'help' as the reformers put it) such women more extensively than men who had committed the same acts. Men simply were not sentenced to state prisons for promiscuity and saloon visiting... To control women's bodies, especially those of 'promiscuous' women, the Albion reformatory used three approaches: incarcerating women, parole revocation and

preventive but protective detention. There was a culture of domesticity within which female sexuality was pathologised and within which a concept of femininity constructed around an image of motherhood prevailed as the norm. Female sexuality was seen as being linked to female criminality and female deviance (Thomas: 1907, Bishop: 1931, Gleuck and Gleuck: 1934, Davis: 1937, Daly: 1978: 155, Sim: 1991: 138, Ussher: 1991: 28-29). Women who were sexual were morally defective, weak-minded, or ill, they were nymphomaniacs, lesbians or prostitutes. Smart found a critical attitude in juvenile institutions (1976: 143, of 'feminine' emotional reactions, 'hysteria', and 'feminine' interests in hair, clothes and cosmetics. Smart determined that female prisoners were expected to be feminine in terms of their domestic role but not their sexual role. Cowie et al (1968: 143), found descriptions of delinquent girls with 'psychiatric' symptoms such as tensions, anxiety, insecurity and feelings of inadequacy. Sumner (1990: 26), calls this the censure of femininity, one of the master censures of a hegemonic masculinity<sup>34</sup>.

Carlen (1986: 249-251), highlighted the propensity of prison staff to pathologise resistance to their regimes when, in fact, she suggested (1986: 253), it was perhaps imprisonment itself that was responsible for depressed or bizarre behaviour. Sim (1991: 8), points out that the rationality of negative responses of those imprisoned to their circumstances has only emerged since the 1970's. Ussher (1991: 6), explores the role of surveillance in the reproduction of madness. Sim (1991 (b): 120), outlines how the internalised anger and powerlessness of imprisoned women manifests itself in self-injury, arm-slashing, head-banging against walls, attempted suicide and suicide<sup>35</sup> (see Leibling: 1994). Worrall (1989: 85) in a study of women on probation

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transfer of intractables to a custodial asylum for 'feeble-minded' women at Rome, New York, where they could be held indefinitely (Hahn Rafter: 1983: 291, see also Brenzel: 1980).

<sup>34</sup> In an exploration of the construct that is woman, emphasising the sociohistorical construction of corporeal self rather than the biological construction, Luce Irigaray (1985:36-37), speaks of the repression of instincts in order to produce 'femininity' in the growing girl child.

<sup>35</sup> Women's prisons are closed frightening and damaging places; sources of violence include both physical and pharmaceutical control; imprisoned women have no effective way of countering prison controls or abuses; in the absence of legitimate grievance strategies some prisoners 'can only stave off their prison-induced fears of death, madness and institutionalisation and general loss of identity by engaging in survival strategies' that may seem inexplicable' (from Carlen et al: 1985, quoted in Sim: 1991: 121).

described how the women internalised pain and self mutilated ‘in an attempt to remain independent of others’ inroads upon them’. Carlen (1986), Sim (1991(a) and 1991(b): 119-122), Ingram Fogel (1993), and Prins (1995), have all written about women and medicine within prisons and penal institutions<sup>36</sup>. The clear issue within penal medicine and psychiatry, as articulated by Carlen (1986: 242), is the fact that within prison the state pays the medics and psychiatrists who examine imprisoned women. The women don’t consult the medics; the state consults the medics about the women.

Carlen (1986: 244), discusses ‘moral management’ and its techniques of manipulation in engendering moral states and the more coercive elements of group therapy<sup>37</sup>: the subversion of the individual, the legitimisation of unanimous decisions, and the pressure towards conformity<sup>38</sup>. Daly (1978: 230-231), discusses the ‘new theology of therapy’ and ‘perpetual therapy’. Sim (1991), cites the benign and benevolent developments of psychiatric care as being defined by Foucault, rather than progress, as ‘strange regression’ (Sim: 1991: 4). He points to its elements of control manifest in its implements: drugs, straitjackets and cellular confinement, referents for power. Heidensohn (1975: 44), said that the different and special approach to treating women in prison is ‘based on the notion that those few offending seriously and frequently enough to warrant imprisonment must be physically and/or mentally in need of therapy’. So, she says, the female prison system is therapeutically oriented. She remarked (1975: 53), on the constant stress in New Holloway for ‘more and better-qualified therapy-oriented staff’<sup>39</sup>. Ussher (1991: 176), denounces

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<sup>36</sup> Many feminist writers have considered the female experience in medicine and psychiatry (Smart: 1976, Daly: 1978, Rowett and Vaughan: 1981, O’Donovan: 1984, Dobash et al: 1986, Poovey: 1989, Showalter: 1987, Ussher: 1991, etc.), and their writings on those experiences make for harrowing reading.

<sup>37</sup> Garland (1990: 261), states that ‘in the original vision of penitentiary reformers such as Howard, prisoners were to be continually addressed by moral exhortations, lectures, and sermons until they were convinced of the sinfulness of their actions and the righteousness of their punishment. Similarly, the advocates of rehabilitation in the twentieth century urged that the offender be made a participant in a therapeutic encounter, through which he or she would come to learn a set of norms and attitudes better adapted to normal social life’. Therapy is considered by Garland to be a ‘developed form of persuasion’ (1990: 261).

<sup>38</sup> ‘Pride in one’s ‘feminine’ appearance and ability to fulfil a stereotype’ are cited as significant factors in the ‘recovery’ of mentally ill and psychopathic female patients in Broadmoor’ (Hutter and Williams: 1981: 21, see also Rowett and Vaughan: 1981: 133- 153, for consideration of the treatment and control of women in Broadmoor).

<sup>39</sup> ‘By the late 1960’s, the consolidation of medical and psychiatric discourses was to be translated into policy terms through the construction of a new prison – Holloway – in London. Holloway was to function as a secure hospital where

'therapy as tyranny'. She says that the medical establishment followed its colonisation of women's bodies with its colonisation of women's minds. She outlines (1991: 176-179), the feminist view of therapy as based on patriarchal principles supporting a patriarchal and misogynistic culture encouraging women to conform, to submit to control<sup>40</sup>.

In 1967 the Home Office (Sim: 1991: 163), without regard for the fact that they were comparing a tiny (female), population serving short sentences for petty crimes with a large (male), population serving long sentences for serious crimes (see Chapter One: page 3 – 4, see also O'Mahony: Chapter One: page: 7, and the Centre for Health Promotion Studies: Chapter One: pages 7 - 8, for problematic comparisons between female and male Irish prison populations), said that 'severe personality and emotional disturbances were more prevalent among women and girls than among men and boys committed to custody'. Sim (1991: 171) points to the use of psychiatric labels such as personality disorder in continuing to reinforce the subordination of the women and he quotes Pat Carlen's contention that imprisoned women feel 'horribly at home' within psychiatry<sup>41</sup> (see Carlen: 1983: 210). Sim concludes that British penal institutions are particularly suited to disciplining women into woman's most appropriate role, that of the child-rearing homemaker.

## **2.7 The Irish Female Prison Experience**

The degree to which the Irish penal system with its own permanent petty tribunals attempted or attempts to 'normalise' (see also Sumner: 1990: 28), the behaviour of imprisoned women has not been documented as Sim has

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ideology and surveillance coexisted with and reinforced technological surveillance...control...that resulted in the individualisation and atomisation of the prisoners as a social group' (Sim: 1999(b): 119, see also Sim: 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Ussher's chapter, '*Routes to Madness*' (1991: 244-283), points to issues such as: poverty; the burden of care; the ceaseless demands on the nurturer; the never-ending work of the home maker; women's vulnerability; woman as a reflection of man's glories; women's lack of opportunity; marital status, the fact that married women are more likely to be depressed; the tyranny of marriage and family violence; the threat and the act of sexual violence; the mirror; images of woman; the body beautiful; advertising woman 'signified by lips, legs, eyes or hair, which stand metonymically...for the sexual woman'; and silent women; as the engenders of madness in women (see also Jahoda: 1995: 251-275).

documented the English experience. However the models have developed on similar lines, evidenced in Ireland's former colonial relationship with the UK, in the architectural and organisational dimensions of Limerick Prison and the Dochas Centre, and in the word 'normalisation'<sup>42</sup>, frequently used, as will be seen, in management circles in Irish female prisons. As detailed in Chapter One (page 5), there have been few studies of women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland. The writers who have written on the topic have written about the nature of female criminality in Ireland and the gendered treatment of women by the law, (see Chapter One: pages 7 – 10), few have focused on women's experiences of imprisonment. Exceptions to this are the academic works, the three PhD's completed to date, and Walsh's M.A (1998), a study of five women in Mountjoy Prison. With the exception of the three PhD's, the studies primarily focus on the demographics of the female prison population and on the health issues among that population, (Carmody and McEvoy: 1996, *The General Healthcare Study of the Irish Prison Population*: 2000).

The historical studies consist primarily of the works of Ward (1995), McCooole (1997, 2003), and Curtin (2001), while Cullen Owens (1984), Cooke (1995), and Carey (2000), also give some detail. In addition there is Buckley's autobiography (1938) of her experience as a revolutionary prisoner. Both Ward (1995), and McCooole (1997, 2003), focus on revolutionary women in the early decades of the twentieth century. McCooole (1997), details the experiences of these women in Kilmainham Gaol and in the North Dublin Union. Curtin's (2001) focus is on the women of Galway Jail in nineteenth century Ireland and the criminality of those women<sup>43</sup>. All of the works focus primarily on the activities of the women, revolutionary or otherwise. All document generally the

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<sup>41</sup> Lieblina et al (1994: 7), in a gendered exploration of despair and medicalisation among prisoners found that women use the word depression and men the word bored to describe the same sensation and where men could externalise the problem, blaming the prison, the pressures they were under, the failures of others, women internalised them.

<sup>42</sup> Corcoran (1999:164), outlines the use of 'normalisation' in the management of, rather than the eradication of, differences between female political prisoners and the penal regime in Northern Ireland (see also the National Council for Civil Liberties: 1986), from hunger strikes, no wash protests and dirty protests, to a momentum towards the reduction of conflict within the prisons with more circumspect cultures of intervention being adopted by the penal regime.



unpleasantness of the prison environment and experience. There is very little detailed analysis. The impact of experiences of imprisonment on women, and the structures of the societies shaping women's prison experiences are given little consideration.

In recent decades four reports were published on prisons and prisoners: the McBride Report, (*Crime and Punishment: The Irish Penal System Commission Report: 1982*) which was commissioned by the Prisoners Rights Organisation; the report from the Council for Social Welfare: A Committee of the Catholic Bishops Conference the 1983 report on *The Prison System*; the 1985 Whittaker Report, (*Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Penal System*), commissioned by the Irish government; in 1994, and the Prison Service's five year plan, the *Management of Offenders*. In general, the reports focus on penalty, and on Ireland's prisons, their structure and effect. The Whittaker Report focused in part on the shortcomings of the facilities and services for prisoners and on the inadequacies of much of the prison accommodation. Just four full pages in that report (pages 73-77), are dedicated to women prisoners. At the time of that research (1984), there were daily averages of around 40 women and 1,550 men in prison. The four pages on women prisoners detail the inadequacies of the women's prisons, while highlighting the needs of the prisons in terms of services and facilities for imprisoned women.

The 2001, *Towards a Model Penal System*, commissioned by the Irish Penal Reform Trust, evaluated the prison system, presented alternatives to prison, and discussed diversions, such as neighbourhood youth projects, from the penal system. In detailing the composition of the prison population, women prisoners were presented in the report in the section on young offenders. In fact, the report devoted a couple of pages only to women offenders. It described as 'especially incongruous' (page 38), the presence of women in prison, if as it

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<sup>43</sup> The historic female experience of incarceration is also to some degree detailed, (see Reynolds: 1992, on psychiatric care in Dublin since 1815, Finnegan: 2001, on women's experiences of Magdalen Asylums, and Raftery and O'Sullivan: 1999, on industrial schools).

says, 'prison should be used for those who represent a danger to the community or for those who have committed the most serious crimes'. The report recommended (page 39), that the population of the women's prison be halved. In 2003, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) published their report to the Government of Ireland on their visit to Ireland's prisons<sup>44</sup>. The Report noted that the new women's prison, the Dochas Centre, was at the time of the visit accommodating 93 women when it was designed for a maximum occupancy of 77. The CPT wanted measures taken to ensure that all the women imprisoned were provided with appropriate accommodation (page 22); the CPT commented on inadequate healthcare provision in that prison (page 26); the inadequate complaints procedure in the prisons generally (page 30), and an inadequate mailing system for prisoner mail (page 31). While the report deemed the regime in the Dochas Centre adequate, although operating above capacity, the report deemed the regimes in the other prisons visited to be poor.

The completed PhD's give a great deal of information on women's experiences of imprisonment and the inadequacies for prisoners of the various prisons within which the PhDs were undertaken. Lundström-Roche detailed the grimness of Mountjoy female prison in the early 1980's, the lack of activity, the high level of security, the closed nature of the institution. She highlighted the imprisonment of women who posed no threat to society, and the failure of the prisons in their rehabilitative and deterrent responsibilities, failures which she wrote (1985: 122), were evident in the prisons' high recidivism rates (see also Morris and Wilkinson: 1995). McCann James detailed the closed nature and the grim aspect of the women's prison at Mountjoy in the late 1990's, when the women were accommodated on one wing in St. Patrick's Institution, before they moved to the Dochas Centre.

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<sup>44</sup> This visit followed a visit by the CPT to Irish prisons in 1993.

O'Mahony (2000: 9), wrote of the Irish prison experience as 'punitive, damaging and painful in a myriad of ways beyond the mere loss of liberty', and he wrote that, 'in many quarters, it is expected to be so'. He (2000: 6), also wrote of Foucault's (1977: 272), contention that prisons are in fact, rather than failures, well-disguised successes, that prisons are in fact more about social control than about the control of individual prisoners. O'Mahony (2000: 6), suggests that this is evidenced in Ireland in the extreme relative social disadvantage of Irish prisoners generally, and the general absence among the Irish prison population of the more privileged classes of Irish society. O'Mahony (2000: 104-105), discusses Carlen's 'state obligated model of punishment' (Carlen: 1994), which highlights, as well as the obligations of denunciation and restitution, the obligation to rehabilitate offenders. Lundström-Roche (1988), in her work found the Irish penal system to be retributive rather than rehabilitative. O'Mahony (2000: 105), while agreeing with Carlen, further suggests that it is important to explicitly acknowledge the necessity of a constructive penal system for the needs of prisoners who have, in fact, been shaped, by society, for crime.

The issues highlighted again and again in the publications on women in prison in Ireland are the small numbers of women in prison, the petty nature of the offences for which they are imprisoned, the inappropriateness of prison sentences for women, and the inadequacies of the prisons, the institutions, for women in terms of accommodation, environment and structure. These studies together present a rich perspective on women's experiences of imprisonment. Despite this, the gaps in the research are quite substantial (see Chapter One: page 10). All of the studies are relatively small scale. They are all situated in narrow historical contexts. They are focused, those few that are focused on women prisoners, on very few and very particular women prisoners. Since the 1800's in fact, the Irish female penal system has not been thoroughly examined. Women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland have never been comprehensively studied. There is little empirical data on women's experiences

of imprisonment. Irish penalty and its operation in relation to women in Irish society has never been thoroughly explored. The social and cultural impact of the prison and experiences of imprisonment on individual women's lives have never, in an Irish context, been thoroughly examined. While my research is necessarily partial, in my research I explored women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland over the last two centuries. I considered the women imprisoned, the offences for which they were imprisoned, the penalties imposed upon them, the institutions within which they were imprisoned, and I considered the societies imprisoning them. I examined women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland both historically and contemporaneously. I particularly focused on the manner in which, within the space that is prison space, the identities of the women are shaped. I did this because it is experiences of lived prison space (see Chapter One: page 2), that produces prisoner identities and subjectivities.

## **2.8 Summary**

Within this literature review I considered the concept of identity within theories of criminality and penalty. I considered the identities of criminal women and of women in prison, the gender and class elements of women's experiences of imprisonment, historical and contemporary representations of criminal women, and women's spatial experiences of imprisonment. I explored the discourses of women's imprisonment, the discourses or gazes which construct, shape and represent imprisoned women. I considered the discursive subject positioning within these discourses of imprisoned women. I am particularly concerned in my work with the manner in which space, in the case of this research, female prison space, engenders and shapes identities. I analyse the manner in which, within sociocultural practice, female prisoner identities are constructed and represented, the manner in which female prisoner subjects are discursively positioned. In my thesis I demonstrate how, through this discursive positioning of the female prisoner subject, social relations of power are reproduced.

## Chapter Three

### Research Methodology

**Ricoeur quotes Locke's case of the 'prince whose memory is transplanted into the body of a cobbler; does the latter become the prince whom he remembers having been, or does he remain the cobbler whom other people continue to observe?' Where Locke favoured the first solution, Ricoeur concludes that the case is undecidable.  
(Ricoeur: 1994: 126)**

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology and methods used in conducting the research. The context for the research is my work as a volunteer in the women's prison at Mountjoy (see Appendix 2, see also Quinlan: 2004). The title *Space, Knowledge and Power* was given by Rabinow (1984), to his publication of an interview he conducted with Foucault. Rabinow clearly indicated by the title the critical importance of *Space* in Foucault's perception and analysis of the social world. The words *Knowledge* and *Power* in the title were also drawn from Foucault's lexis; deploying them in the title of the work served both to foreground and relate them. The words, Space, Knowledge and Power, are central to my own work.

My thesis is based on a critical ethnographic study. In the analysis of the ethnographic data I incorporated discourse analysis. This combination of ethnography and discourse analysis is central to my study. It was through ethnography that I became embedded in the site of my research. It was through my theoretical work I came to recognise my data streams as discourses, this recognition led me in my work to discourse analysis. It was through discourse analysis that I began to analyse the discourses of my study semiologically<sup>1</sup>. Fairclough (1995), integrated discourse analysis with social analysis of sociocultural change, combining, as he said (1995:2), a Bakhtinian theory of genre, in analysis of discourse practice, and a Gramscian theory of hegemony, in analysis of socio-cultural practice. The Bakhtinian theory, he holds,

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<sup>1</sup> This combination of critical ethnography and critical discourse analysis is recommended by several theorists and methodologists in Sunderland (2004: 14).

highlights the productivity and creativity of discourse practice, while the theory of hegemony details how, in discourse practice, power relations constrain and control that productivity and creativity. The discourses of my study are the forms of knowledge, structured by power, that detail the identities of the women, that, subject position the women, that, I will argue, help to shape the women's subjectivities, their senses of self. Discourses, Fairclough (1995: 4) details, can be written texts, spoken words, and/or cultural artefacts. We live in a socio-historical world; many of the discourses of our world are socio-historical. They are embedded in the social and they evolve with it or they direct its evolution. The discourses of my study are the institutional structures, artefacts and forms of knowledge, structured by power, that detail the identities of the women. Identities in post-structuralism are progressively and dynamically achieved through discursive practices, and, as Fairclough (1995: 43) writes, discourses cumulatively contribute to the reproduction of macro structures. I am concerned in my thesis with the discursive subject positioning of the Irish female prisoner, with the manner in which, within that experience of imprisonment, Irish female prisoner identity is established, the manner in which it is ascribed, and the manner in which it is performed.

### **3.2 Ethnography**

As stated, my thesis is based on a critical ethnographic study. In my work I was concerned with developing accounts of lived experience from the perspective of those living the experience. The commitment is to understanding people's lives from within (Oakley: 1981: 57, Hammersley and Atkinson: 1995, Neuman: 2000: 347-379, Toren: 2000: 102-112, Robson: 2002: 186-190). Ethnography basically calls for a descriptive analysis of the everyday (McNeill: 1985: 65), Clifford Geertz's (1993: 9), thick description (see also Hammersley: 1992a: 12). My thesis is a description of the experiences and identities of women imprisoned in Ireland. It is a study of the contemporary collective processes

within the everyday world of the Irish female prison (see Hammersley and Atkinson: 1995: 2).

Bourdieu (1991), highlighted the institutions of power that construct everyday life. This power is, as he said, symbolic power; it is violent because it privileges some perspectives while repressing others. This symbolic power and the effect of its wielding, produces what Lefebvre (1991 Ed.), called the 'terrorism of everyday life'. The task of the critical ethnographer, according to Thomas (1993: 7), is to resist symbolic power, and the manner in which it ideologically and hegemonically controls society, and to examine and reveal the deeper levels the cultural experience. Thomas states (1993: 33-34), that critical ethnographers begin from the premise that cultural forces disadvantage some groups more than others, that 'bodies of ideas, norms and ideologies create meanings...constructing social subjects', and that 'these and other roles and identities typify the invisible realm of meanings that stratify people and distribute power and resources in subtle ways'. Fairclough (1995: 17), states that 'what makes theory critical is that it takes a pejorative view of ideology as a means through which social relations of power are reproduced'. In my work I explore the deeper levels and meanings of the Irish female prison and imprisoned woman's experiences of it.

Ethnography is field research and the field researcher, the methodological pragmatist (Schatzman and Strauss: 1973: 7, see also Hammersley: 1992a: 163, and Hammersley and Atkinson: 1995: 1), uses a variety of methods to gather information. The ethnographer goes inside the culture to develop an understanding of the meaning of the culture for those living the culture and then goes outside the culture to develop an outside or research perspective on the culture (Neuman: 2000: 349): the researcher adopts an attitude of strangeness (Neuman: 2000: 355, see also Hammersley and Atkinson: 1995: 9), noticing the ordinary through the eyes of a stranger. The ethnographer recognises and seizes opportunities, not beginning with a set of methods to apply to an explicit

hypothesis but choosing techniques based on the level of familiarity the ethnographer has with the situation, the degree of access the ethnographer has to the situation, the value of the data collection technique in providing information: the ethnographer moves from less focused to more focused data collection as the study progresses (Neuman: 2000: 350).

According to Neuman (2000: 363), good field notes are critical to the success of the ethnographic project....'maps, diagrams, photographs, interviews, tape recordings, video tapes, memos, objects from the field, notes jotted in the field and detailed notes written away from the field': Wolf (1992: 86), comments that attitudes to field notes differ greatly among ethnographers pointing to research conducted on attitudes to field notes which found that some ethnographers hold their notes in reverence, some read and re-read them, and some said they barely look at them when they write their ethnographies, but, she said, 'in one way or another, all anthropologists seem to make some kinds of notes in the process of field work that end up having some kind of effect on their later writing'. In my study the field notes collected included diagrams, charts, interviews, taped and manually recorded, photographs, hand-written memos, documents, records and newspapers.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 11-14, see also Denzin: 1997: 253-279), outline the doubts that have been raised regarding ethnography in terms of claims of naturalism and claims to literal representations of the natural world. The issues centre on the debate between realism and constructivism, the notion of one objective reality and the conflict between this and the social constructionist perspective portraying people as constructing the social world. The conflict is compounded by conceptualising ethnographers' descriptions of the social worlds they report on as their constructions of that world and by the poststructuralist's destabilisation of meaning, meaning conceived of as a reflection of the constitution of subjectivities (see also Hammersley: 1992a).



Wolf (1992: 5), commented upon the post-modern critique of ethnography. In this critique the ethnographic process is viewed as an exercise in colonization and domination with dubious possibilities of representing the experiences of other cultures and attendant ethical issues in attempting to do so. Wolf countered this by saying that ethnography is simply the communication of the ethnographers' understandings of their observations of that other culture. Clifford Geertz (1973: 16), said that the claim to significance of the ethnographic project lies in the degree to which the ethnographer is able to 'clarify what goes on in such places'. In conducting this research I was conscious at all times of the problems and pitfalls of cultural domination, colonialism, ethnocentrism, racism and imperialism, potentially inherent particularly in researching vulnerable groups. This thesis is ultimately, after Wolf (1992), no more than the communication of my own understanding of my observations of the world of the Irish female prison.

### **3.3 A Feminist Study**

Feminist ways of knowing, of establishing knowledge, emphasise an explication of the process and context of knowledge making. Feminist research methodologies posit gender as a fundamental theoretical concept; within feminist methodology social scientists argued for a sociology for and by women. The term feminism came into regular use in language with a political meaning in the 1890's with feminists' concerns regarding the political and social rights of women (Humm 1992, Beasley, 1999), feminists today are still concerned with women's political and social rights but they are also concerned with the female experience and the female experience of womanhood. In her objection to the narrow perspective of the traditional scientific research paradigm, Dorothy Smith said that 'science devalues the specific subjectivities of any person whom it observes' (Humm: 1992: 305, see also Flax in Jackson: 1993: 20) and she outlined (Smith: 1974: 7 – 14) how, through qualitative research techniques, feminist theory can help to create a better social science.

This research examines the experiences of imprisoned women and the impact of the discursive subject positioning within prison of the identities of imprisoned women, while being cognisant of the fact of the female prison in Ireland impacting on the lives of women who take many other roles in that institution. This research is standpoint research (Cain: 1986: 259-261, Denzin: 1997: Chapter 3, Olesen: 2000: 222-224), with its critical realist ontology and its ethnographic methodology (Denzin: 1997: 62); in the sense that it is taking up the absence of research on the experiences of women imprisoned in Ireland and in the sense that it is feminist research (see Byrne and Lentin: 2000: introduction), 'working towards a transformative understanding of women's conditions' (Cain: 1986: 256).

Everitt and Fisher (1995: 1-11), exploring the meaning of epistemology outline a theory of knowledge, an inquiry into the nature of knowledge, exploring Cartesian and other definitions and explorations of knowledge: they consider empirical and a priori knowledge, the knowledge of the senses, of introspection, memory, experience and testimony, authority and precognition. They explore (1995: 5), the demarcation of the knowable, the limits of what can be known and our instruments or mechanisms for knowing, the way we reason and think, 'how we ought to conduct our search after knowledge, what would be right for us to accept and what we would be justified in believing.....a task which requires some grasp of what knowledge is, what its limits are and what its sources are...' (Everitt and Fisher: 1995: 8).

Epistemologically feminist methodology focuses on the ways we use to know what it is we know (see Gorelick: 1991: 469). Alienated knowledge is knowledge produced without any account of the social context of its production. Hammersley (1992b), in his assessment of the claims for a distinctive feminist methodology, condemns the previous neglect of gender in methodology as 'astonishing and deplorable' (1992: 191) (see also Fox Keller: 1985), while arguing against the idea of a specifically feminist methodology,

fearing 'a balkanisation of social science' (1992: 203). Gelsthorpe (1992) in her response to Hammersley (1992b) (see also Ramazanoglu: 1992: 207-212), underlines feminists' struggles with issues of power and control (Gelsthorpe: 1992: 217), and the essential recognition of the 'subjectivity' of research participants concluding that, as there is no feminist consensus on methodology, Hammersley, in his argument against feminist methodology, 'demolished a case that never really was'.

Feminist methodology<sup>2</sup> is reflexive. As Wolf asserts (1992: 132), 'before reflexivity was a trendy term, feminists were examining 'process' (the use of power and powerlessness), in our dealings with one another'. Gelsthorpe (1990) and Cain (1986 and 1990a/b), have considered feminist methodology and prison research and feminist methodology and the law: the critical issue for Gelsthorpe (1990: 105), is 'to challenge the supremacy of more conventional methods and approaches' while Cain (1990a: 138-139), is concerned with the way in which knowledge is produced; the political integration of knowledge (see also Gorelick: 1991: 462), and the knowledge producers account of their knowledge. Feminist methodology calls for a development of social relationships with the people studied, politically engaging with people and seeking their emancipation through dialogical research strategies. The focus is on making women's experiences visible.

Feminist methodology calls for a challenge to the power differential between the researcher and those researched (Gelsthorpe: 1990: 91, Cain: 1986: 261); for the researcher to be conscious of the 'othering' that is frequently fundamental to the research process; and conscious of the propensity of researchers to name others without consultation, to purport to somehow know others better than they know themselves.

**'My choice of topic to investigate, my sampling procedure and my interpretation can exclude some and silence other research participants; my voice can displace the voices**

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<sup>2</sup> That is, feminist methodological preferences expressed in sympathy with feminist aims (Gelsthorpe: 1992: 217).

**that speak the data; my account will transform what is said and my research act can be an act of colonisation.'**  
(Byrne: 2000a:144)

The obligations of feminist epistemology made me conscious of my power in entering the female prison, in gaining access to all areas within the prison, in gaining access to all individuals within the prison, to their thoughts, feelings and beliefs about the prison and, with regard to imprisoned women, to their identities within the prison as imprisoned women. Feminist epistemology made me conscious of my power and responsibility in writing these experiences, in representing these experiences publicly.

Edmondson (2000: 201) referred to Gadamer's explanation of the hermeneutic equality of openness to the other person, 'including the possibilities that one's own position is mistaken and the other's is correct...that one's own conceptual and emotional structures may need radical revision in order to understand the other person'. I believe that this equity between people, this hermeneutic equity in terms of openness, is essential to the process of research in the social sciences. Beyond hermeneutic equity, however, I am among the sceptics in terms of the general degree of equity that can be achieved between researcher and researched, particularly when the researched are members of a population living in radically more difficult circumstances to those of the researcher, who, in many cases, has lived through radically more difficult life experiences to those of the researcher, and whose background is generally radically different from that of the researcher.

To refuse to acknowledge these issues lends an air of tokenism to attempts to overcome them and discredits the research and the researcher in terms of the essential reflexivity of the research project. There appears on occasion, within theorising in feminist methodology, to be an issue regarding scholarship within feminist social research (Byrne and Lentin: 2000: 50 and Lynch: 2000: 92). The issue centres on the possibility of scholarly research being less accessible to

some members of the research's potential audience. Scholarship is fundamental to the academic research project (see Walby: 2001: 485-509), feminist research should not be precluded from scholarship. In addressing the issue of accessibility in research, the feminist researcher faces the challenge of striking a balance between developing their own skills, producing excellent scholarly research, supporting and empowering the researched, and disseminating the findings of the research.

I was conscious at all times in conducting the research of my responsibility to both the world I was reporting on and the world which is reported to (Edmondson: 2000: 188). I attempted through the development of my relationships with imprisoned women to be circumspect in terms of any trappings of privilege, liberty and education, that might be evident about me. I speak with the women in a manner congenial to them. I engage with them in terms of where they are and I respond to their questions about my research openly honestly and fully. They are free to engage with me, or to refuse to engage with me, as they will. Their responses to my research into the prison experiences of women have been, to date, without exception positive. There appears to be a feeling among these women of being abandoned by the community, their seclusion within prison is so complete. The research will, I hope, through rendering them visible, challenge the feeling of forgottenness that for some dominates their experiences of life in prison.

The research process was a participatory research process, as I participated with them, to the extent that a non-prisoner can, in the life of the prison and they engaged with me in the research process. The engagement of the women with the research process was essential to the data collection methods used in the research with the women, observation, in-depth interviewing, photography and photo-elicitation interviews. Although Wolf (1992: 121), questions the ethics of asking unsophisticated persons or groups to take responsibility for the analysis of their way of life, and her concern is in some respects warranted, the

interpretation of the research findings for this thesis was conducted collaboratively with the series of photo-elicitation interviews with some highly sophisticated women and with some less so.

The research undertaken with the professionals working in or with the female prison was also participatory. The relationships I developed with the professionals working in and with the prison service were as fundamental to this research as the relationships I developed with the imprisoned women. I believe that if the people running the prisons had doubted my sincerity and/or the sincerity of my research, the research would not have taken place. The entire research process was dialogical. They all did 'ask back' (Oakley: 1981:30, McDonagh: 2000: 237).

### **3.4 Data Collection Techniques**

The research questions detailed in the data collection methods outlined below emerged from the aim of the research and they developed from the project's theoretical framework. In my empirical work I explore the experiences of women in prison in Ireland and within those experiences constructions and representations of their identities within powerful defining discourses.

The data collection techniques employed in this research encompassed quantitative and qualitative methods with visual elements. The quantitative data very quickly details and contextualises the women's prison in Ireland. It gives a general sense of the women, who they were and why they were imprisoned. It details their numbers, their crimes and their sentences. This detail is, I think, useful in developing a profile of the women's prison in Ireland. Bosworth (1999), considers data from prison service surveys and annual reports<sup>3</sup> 'abstractions...with scant intrinsic meaning'. The data cannot, according to

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<sup>3</sup> 'Most of the women in prison are poor. Almost a third of them are on remand. Usually they are repeat offenders, imprisoned for petty, non-violent crimes, and, increasingly for drug-related offences. Most have at least one child. Often they are single mothers....' (Bosworth: 1999: 2).

Bosworth (1999: 2), say very much about who these women are, about why they have come to prison or about what they feel about it; what they feel about imprisonment and what they believe the role of the prison to be in their lives. Yet it is the women's subjective sense of the experience, the meaning they make of the experience for themselves that elaborates their evaluation and negotiation of prison and imprisonment. It is individual women's subjectivity and sense of identity that, for Bosworth, takes research beyond empiricism and empirical characterisation.

While quantitative data is used, and is very useful, (see Hammersley: 1985), in this thesis, it is, as Bosworth suggests, the more qualitative data that serves to elaborate the women's lives, the discourses within which they are interpellated, their prison experiences and within those experiences, their subjective senses of themselves. This research in documenting women's experiences of prison in Ireland, explores as it does constructions and representations of the women within historical, expert, institutional and personal discourses. The primary data collection undertaken with the imprisoned women took place three years after I began my voluntary work in the prison; I spent those three years engaged in informal observations and in non-directive 'interviewing' or conversation with imprisoned women. Those experiences, with the experiences of the formal observations, detailed below, facilitated the development of the interview schedules and processes ultimately used with the women.

#### **3.4(i) Observation**

I observed six months of multi-disciplinary management meetings at the Dochas Centre; in all I attended 12 meetings from December 5<sup>th</sup> 2000 to May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2001. The meetings are a forum for the managers of the different units or areas within the prison to get together to monitor and plan the workings and the development of the Dochas Centre. Generally in attendance at the meetings were John Lonergan, Governor of Mountjoy Prison, Kathleen McMahon, now Governor of the Dochas Centre, Catherine Comerford, then Assistant Governor

Dochas Centre, and Aileen Grealley, then Chief Officer in the Dochas Centre. In addition to these people, the school was represented, trades were represented, the kitchen, the library, the Chaplaincy were represented, as were Prison Officers, the CONNECT project<sup>4</sup>, Probation and Welfare, the Healthcare Unit when the Doctor joined the staff, and the psychology service when such a service was available within the prison<sup>5</sup>.

### **3.4(ii) In-depth Interviews**

Three sets of in-depth interviews were conducted for this research. In the first set, 30 interviews were conducted with experts involved with the women's prisons; the second set was conducted with women in prison, 83 women in total; and the final set, a series of photo elicitation interviews, was conducted with 20 women from the 83 originally interviewed. All of the interviews were undertaken using a judgmental sampling method, whereby I decided who to interview based on the insight they could give me into women in prison in Ireland. The 83 interviews conducted with the imprisoned women were undertaken from time to time using a snowball sampling technique, whereby a woman interviewed would ask me to also interview her friend.

The first set of interviews were conducted, as stated, with experts involved with or working in or with the women's prison and/or the prison service (see Appendix Three for list of interviewees). This set of interviews gave me an insight into imprisoned women's experiences of management and it gave me an insight into the manner in which experts working with them represent imprisoned women. These interviews also gave me an insight into the development of policy in terms of the female prison in Ireland, into the management and staffing of the female prison, and into the development of the female prison. This data provided an in-depth view of a particular perspective

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<sup>4</sup> This project was instituted in prisons through the Irish Prison Service, it was designed to help socially and vocationally women and men in and leaving the prison. The project has faltered due to budgetary constraints.

<sup>5</sup> When the psychologist resigned she was not replaced. She worked for the Prison Service and divided her time between prisons. At the time of the primary research she spent two days a week in Mountjoy Women's Prison, the Dochas Centre.



on the experiences of prison provided for imprisoned women in Ireland, the expert and institutional discourses shaping those experiences, and ascribing identities to the imprisoned women.

I was privileged to interview, during this process, Sue Richardson, a woman who had been imprisoned in Ireland in from 1979 to 1980. Sue's experience of the female prison at Mountjoy, her memory of it, and her concerns about it, contributed enormously to my understanding of the prison at that time and women's experiences of that prison. While there was provision in policy at the time of Sue's imprisonment for the separate confinement of political prisoners, she told me in interview that she resisted being labelled political in part she said because such labelling would have resulted in her being separated from the other women prisoners in Mountjoy Prison. She would, as a consequence of such separation, have been unable to attend the prison school. At the time of Sue's imprisonment there were about 20 women on average in prison daily in Ireland (see Chapter Four: page 135).

Also in this series of interviews, I conducted a group interview with the Mountjoy Prison Visiting Committee. This interview was arranged by Governor Lonergan's office and it took place in the boardroom at Mountjoy Prison. The schedule used for the interviews (see Appendix Four), facilitated an examination of the issues in women's imprisonment in Ireland: the recent past and issues and concerns in that; the new women's prison, The Dochas Centre, it's genesis, design and purpose; women prisoners were considered, who they were, how they were identified, defined, represented and discussed, and the issues and concerns of women prisoners, as well as issues and concerns in imprisoning women.

The second set of interviews was conducted with 83 imprisoned women. The interview schedule used (see Appendix Five), was constructed to facilitate a recording of the lives of the imprisoned women, their personal lives and

personal identities, their experiences of imprisonment and their senses of self. In my experience, the women in the prison did not engage in abstract self-reflection, any early attempts I made to discuss notions of identity with the women were met with disinterest<sup>6</sup>. The women were interested in and enjoyed discussing and analysing their experiences, and this is the approach I took to these interviews. The areas explored in the interviews included the following:

- **Background Information:** In this section we discussed committal dates, sentences and offences, current offences and any previous offences.
- **Family and Home:** In this section we explored the woman's origins, their birthplace, the whereabouts of family, of partners and children. We explored the woman's experiences of relationships, the levels of support if any she enjoyed. Finally we discussed abuse and any experiences of abuse she had had.
- **Education and Training:** We discussed the woman's experiences of school, experiences of education and experiences of training. I recorded the women's ages on school-leaving ages and literacy levels. We also discussed experiences of education, training and development within the prison.
- **Work and Employment:** We talked about the woman's employment experiences before she came to prison, we talked about her interests and ambitions and we discussed her engagement, or her lack of engagement with work within prison, we talked about the kind of work opportunities available to her in her life, we talked about her engagement if any with those.

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<sup>6</sup> Byrne (2003: 443-464), proposed a sociological model for researching women's self and social identities, her initial interest being sparked as she says (2003: 445), by the narrow social repertoire of identities permissible for women. Byrne models self-identity in four constituent elements: experiencing the self in interaction with others; developing the capacity for self-knowledge; devising care and practices of the self; and being self-reflexive. About half of the women of my study were working class women, the other half were women living lives of extreme marginality. There were one or two middle class women. I generally found that the women experienced a degraded sense of self in relation to others; they all had a capacity for self-knowledge and while most if not all of them would take the greatest care and interest in their appearances, some of them had little interest in or knowledge of caring for the self. For some their self-reflections were limited; they were limited, I would suggest, by their youth, by the narrowness of their lives, by poverty, by addiction, by the lack of space they had to themselves, by the lack of time they had for themselves, by the lack of opportunity for self-reflection they had in their lives, and by the absence in their lives of experiences of being nurtured.

- **Crime History:** In this section we considered the woman's crime history, her first experiences of crime, the kinds of criminal activity she engaged in, her age on first offence and age on first arrest, her number of convictions.
- **The Experience of Prison:** In this section we explored the woman's experiences of imprisonment, within that we talked about coming into prison, about becoming a prisoner, and we talked about experiences of punishment within prison.
- **Well-being in Prison:** We talked about the woman's experience of healthcare within the prison and her sense of well-being. We talked about access to doctors and therapists, Probation and Welfare professionals and the Visiting Committee. We talked about sexuality within prison and the woman's experience of sexuality within the prison and/or her sense of sexuality within prison. We talked about control in prison and about surveillance within prison and we talked about the woman's experiences if any of self-harm and about her experiences of threats, bullying or assaults.
- **Addictions:** In this section we explored addiction, her experiences if any of addiction or addictive substances. We talked about smoking, about alcohol, about prescription and illicit drugs. We talked about drug use within and without prison, we talked of histories of drug use, of histories of addictions, and we talked of experiences of overdoses and detoxes, treatment and therapy.
- **The Media and the Female Prison:** we discussed the woman's experiences if any of press or media coverage of her crime or crimes or her prison sentence and/or experience and we discussed her awareness of the press and media coverage of the women's prison and the women within it.
- **Social Geography:** In this section I was interested in exploring the women's socio-geographic experiences, from childhood to adulthood. In adulthood I was interested in experiences of travel, experiences of visiting, visiting relatives and friends, shopping trips, socialising, and any short breaks and/or holidays. My interest in these experiences emanated from my

interest in women's experiences of space and their sense of space and imprisoned women's experiences of space and sense of space.

- **Autonomy in the women's lives:** In this section I explored with the woman her experiences of personal control and autonomy, we explored her knowledge of or sense of any role she might have and her sense of any responsibilities she might have. We discussed the woman's sense of herself.
- **Time and Space:** In this section I discussed with the woman her sense of herself as a woman and most particularly her sense of being a woman in prison. We discussed her experiences of personal prison space and her experiences of prison time.
- **The Future:** Finally I discussed with the woman her concerns on leaving prison, her plans on leaving prison and any supports she might have on leaving and any choices that she believed she would have when she did leave. We discussed the effect or effects on her, as she perceived them, of her prison experience.

Taken together these areas facilitated the women in articulating their lives and their prison experiences. This articulation then allowed me to begin to develop my analysis of the women's identities as they themselves present them.

The interviews with the women were recorded manually because the women indicated that they were more comfortable with the method. The interviews took place, almost all of them, in the women's private rooms/cells<sup>7</sup>. During the interviews, some women lay down on their beds and I sat in a chair beside them, some of the women sat on a chair at their desk and I sat on another chair beside them or across from them. We generally drank tea or coffee and ate biscuits, most of the women smoked. Some of the women moved around a lot, they went into the bathroom, they spoke to me from the bathroom, they put on make-up, rearranged their hair, they changed clothes, they sewed and took up hems, they got involved in conversations being carried on outside the room,

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<sup>7</sup> Rooms in the Dochas Centre, cells in Limerick Prison.

they asked to go back over areas and issues, often I looked back on the notes and picked up on issues. Sometimes the woman made a phone call; sometimes she took a phone call, sometimes officers' called to the room to take shop orders. Sometimes we went together for lunch or for supper, sometimes we went to meet and chat with other women, we called to the school, to the Healthcare Unit, to the Chaplain.

I took all of this activity, and indeed the inactivity, as an indication of the degree of ease the women felt in my company. I took their full and frank engagement with me regarding the research issues, their life experiences, their prison experiences, their personal identities and their senses of self, to be an indication of their confidence and trust in this process. The women generally commented that the interviews were interesting, they found this process interesting, the process was one in which they could talk, confidentially confide if they wished, for as long as they wanted. The interviews lasted on average, excluding interruptions and breaks, two and a half hours. One interview was conducted over two days<sup>8</sup> and three interviews which were terminated after an hour. In general, two interviews were conducted per day in the Dochas Centre. In Limerick Prison more interviews were conducted because the small contained nature of that prison and the level of inactivity generally in that prison facilitated this. The manual recording of the interviews gave the women a sense of what was deemed to be important in our dialogues. The women were able to check, and they did check, on what I was recording and why I was recording it. They frequently commented on and questioned the recording, what was recorded and why it was recorded. They wanted to know why I wrote this down or why I did not write that down and so on, and in this manner the women participated in the recording of the interviews as they participated in the interviews. Particularly for women with literacy issues, this method of recording proved most useful.

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<sup>8</sup> This interviewee was one of my friends in the prison. She took the occasion of the interview to be an opportunity for her to explore her life, to reflect on her life, and to articulate the experiences of her life. I was happy to facilitate this experience and to support her and respond to her during and after it.

Together, each woman and I directed the interview collaboratively but I had in the interview schedule detailed the issues and areas I wanted to explore. These partially guided the process. Through interactivity we were led into areas and issues I had not previously considered. Every woman I interviewed had a unique life experience and every woman emphasised different areas of her life and experiences in different ways. For example one woman talked to me at length of her family, another of her ambitions for her life, another of her experiences in prostitution. The schedule used with the women was detailed in order to ensure important issues were not lost, glossed over or forgotten. The interviews were received by the women who participated as opportunities to reflect on their life and their prison experiences.

The women in Limerick Prison were interviewed over one weekend in April 2001 and 11 of the 12 women imprisoned there at that time participated in the interviews. In the Dochas Centre, 72 women were interviewed over the months of July and August 2001. The courts were in summer recess at this time and so women were not being committed to the prison. Given the size of the sample of women interviewed, the capacity of the women's prison, for 79 women, and recidivism rates in excess of 70% among women in prison in Ireland (see Chapter Four: page 119), this element of the research can be said to be representative of the women currently being imprisoned in Ireland. The interviews for the most part took place, as stated, privately in the women's rooms. In general the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. In one case two women were interviewed together, at their request. The interview schedule used with the women in Limerick Prison was amended, given the experience of the interview process in Limerick Prison, for use with the women in the Dochas Centre.

In analysing this interview data, initially the quantitative data was inputted into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists). This facilitated a useful quantitative exploration of data that lent itself to that kind of analysis, the age

range among the women, the average age, the number of women who were mothers, the social class of the women, the work they had engaged in, their levels of education, the number of convictions, the sentences imposed upon them, the number of women who smoked, who drank alcohol, who had drug habits or drug addictions, the number of women who had experienced abuse, the numbers who were or who felt vulnerable in prison, the numbers of women who engaged with the prison schools or who worked or had jobs in prison, the numbers of women who had been formally disciplined within prison and so on (see Chapter Six). This data was used to provide background and context to the women's experiences. The process of breaking the data down into different and separate variables and categories was also useful in terms of qualitative analysis. However the effect of the process of categorising the women's responses disrupted, de-contextualised and de-territorialised the women's narratives, and so when I had completed the categorisation of the women's responses I then drew all the data together and compiled narratives of the women's experiences. Following the de-construction for analysis of the women's experiences, these narratives re-constructed the women's lives into meaningful, entire, integrated and individual experiences. Finally the interview transcripts were divided by national and non-national status and then subdivided by age (into decades), and analysed thematically. The analysis presented in the thesis represents a synopsis of the quantitative data for context and an elaboration of the qualitative narrative and thematic explorations of these women's life experiences, their prison experiences, their personal identities and their senses of self.

### **3.4(iii) Spatial Analysis**

My spatial analysis of the female experience of imprisonment led to the development of my visual/photographic exploration of prison space (see Dowdall and Golden (1989), for a photographic study of experiences of psychiatric institution space,), as experienced by women prisoners. I photographed imprisoned women's rooms or cells, areas I thought of as their

space, and within those spaces their dressing tables (see Sontag: 1977). Then I engaged in the final set of interviews, the photo-elicitation interviews, conducted with twenty women. Women from a relatively broad range of backgrounds, ethnic and cultural heritage's' were invited to participate. Of the twenty women interviewed, seventeen were in the Dochas Centre and three were in Limerick Prison. Sixteen were Irish, three were South African and there was one woman from Switzerland. The oldest woman was fifty years of age, the youngest twenty. Two of the women were serving life sentences, one of the women had effectively been serving life by instalments, seven of the women were serving sentences of four to seven years, three of the women were serving sentences of two to four years and the remaining women were serving short sentences. One of the women interviewed was a retired company director, four of the women were homeless, there were two Traveller women and two black women in the group. One of the women acknowledged being HIV positive, two of the women had been from time to time to the Central Mental Hospital, and one of the women was pregnant at the time of interview.

In the photo-elicitation interviews the women discussed the photographs I had taken of their rooms and they considered and/or explained the significance of the cultural artefacts depicted in the photographs. The issues explored (see Appendix Six), were women's experiences of their personal prison space, the meaning of their artefacts as depicted in the photographs of that space, and their experiences of control within that space. Photo-elicitation is a method (Becker: 1974: 14); whereby the researcher uses photographs to engage the informants in verbal commentary, a method Collier and Collier (1986) (see Harper: 1998: 35), refer to as the photo-interview. This involves exploring the photographs with the owners of the object or objects photographed, making full use of their expertise, and encouraging them to photograph and to comment on and analyse the photographs and their expression of their identities, their culture and their space. Harper (1998: 35), says that the researcher must make it known to the subjects that their 'taken-for-granted' knowledge of the images is not shared by



the researcher and that this knowledge or understanding is the understanding the research is attempting to reach (see also Harper 1989, 1996).

In conducting the photographic project I used my camera, a Pentax MZ-50, an automatic camera, automatic f-stop, shutter speed and focus with an inbuilt flash. I used it with a standard 35-80mm lens; 35mm colour film, and I offered the women the use of disposable cameras to photograph their space, most of the women declined<sup>9</sup>. My intention was to capture visually imprisoned women's experiences of prison space and within their personal prison spaces, their presentations of self. I used my camera to record a photo inventory of the women's rooms and their dressing tables, their cultural shrines (see McMann: 1998). These cultural shrines provided powerful representations of the women, their creative and aesthetic individuality. While I was trying essentially to capture a personality, I was not relying on facial or bodily impressions or expressions to do so and I was endeavouring to do it as unobtrusively as possible. However, photography cannot be employed as an unobtrusive non-reactive research method (Lee: 2000), because it is neither unobtrusive (see Atwood: 2000), nor non-reactive. It is rather a substantial and data rich research method (Ball and Smith: 1992, Chaplin: 1994, Prosser: 1998, Deacon et al: 1999, Lee: 2000, Thomas: 2000, Emmison and Smith: 2000, Rose: 2001, Van Leeuwen and Jewitt: 2001). It may also be used as a validator of other research methods whereby the evidence of the photograph, supported by the participants in the research, can represent and render visible the phenomenon under investigation. The vivid expression of personality in the lived female prison space of their rooms and their dressing tables so full of signs and representations, were free from the problematic of photographing living moving individuals where fleeting expressions, mood changes, hair, face, body mass,

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<sup>9</sup> The women were in their rooms, they were very relaxed, some of them lay on their beds, and they wanted to talk. They talked about themselves, their lives and their prison experiences. They were interested in my photography and my photographing their spaces rather than in photographing their rooms themselves. I believe that this represents more an interest on their behalf in an opportunity to talk to someone in a confidential safe space than an indication of a lack of interest in photographing their space. Their lack of engagement with the photographic project suggests perhaps that I might have undertaken that element of the research separately from the in-depth interviews, however, the in-depth interviews established a rapport between the women and myself, a rapport which I believe served to neutralise, during those interviews, the overt and inherent intrusiveness of the camera.

movement, graceful or graceless, clothes and accessories, companions and props, all possibly unrepresentative in general of the underlying personality, might, through photography, be frozen forever and used falsely as permanent representations of those individuals. As Barthes said (2000a: 6), the referent adheres.

Collier and Collier (1986:45), outline how a cultural inventory can be used to detail the person's quality of life, they say that the range of artefacts, their placement in space, the way people order their possessions is in fact an expression of culture and identity. In this element of the research I was interested in exploring the women's personal identities and expressions of self as they were manifest within the women's personal prison spaces, within the various gazes of prison space. I was interested in exploring the personal identities and senses of self the women presented in those spaces ruled by penal discourses. The age of photography coincided with the explosion of the private into the public or as Barthes says (2000a: 98), the creation of a new social value, the publicity of the private, the public consumption of the private. The prison as a public institution is used by society to incarcerate those it wishes to punish and/or exclude. The tension between the public function of the prison and the privacy of those contained within is a tension that frequently becomes fraught, certainly in Ireland (see Chapter Five). The aggression of surveillance, one-sided surveillance, the issues of the exotic and the voyeur and the chosen medium of representation in this research, the photograph, were issues that I had to consider.

As with all research methods the manner, demeanour and body language of the photographer are of paramount importance, in terms of gaining access to the field and then in maintaining that access. Collier and Collier (1986: 22) note that with every picture you take in the field the purpose of your research becomes more and more apparent to the participants in the research. My photography required the consent and co-operation of the women in the prison.

One woman in the course of the time I spent with her in her room interviewing her and taking photographs and inviting her to take photographs said: 'I know what you're doing, you're trying to explain to them out there what we're really like in here', and that is of course what I am trying to do. My representation of this element of the women's prison experience is related to my perception of that experience and my perception of the powerful representations of these women created by them in their personal prison space. The result of this element of the research is a photo narrative of women's presentations of self within Irish prison space and a cultural inventory of Irish female prison space

#### **3.4(iv) Content Analysis**

In my analysis of the subject positioning of the women in contemporary popular discourses I examined representations of imprisoned women in the press. Using content analysis I examined six Sunday newspapers, three broadsheets and three tabloids over a period of one year and two daily newspapers, one tabloid and one broadsheet, over a period of six months, in other words, 312 Sunday newspapers and 360 daily newspapers, in total 672 newspapers. The papers were examined from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 to September 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 and every day from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001 to October 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 respectively. This method was chosen rather than a daily analysis over one or two months as it was felt that a broader temporal spread of data collection would be likely to produce a better representation of the print media's construction of female offenders. A quantitative, qualitative and semiotic analysis of the content of the print media revealed the press's construction and representation of the identities of women prisoners and through that, gave some indication of public and popular perceptions of the women.

The trawl of this sample of Ireland's newspapers yielded 57 newspaper articles. Of the 57 articles, twenty were in the tabloid newspaper *the Evening Herald*, twelve were in the tabloid the *Sunday World*, ten were in the *Irish Times*, there were five in the tabloid *Ireland on Sunday*, four in the broadsheet the *News of*

*the World* and there were two in each of the *News of the World*, the *Sunday Independent* and the *Sunday Business Post*. The word count of the articles ranged from 16 to 1400 words with one third of the articles being between 200-400 words. Although overall the *Evening Herald* carried the greatest number of stories, in fact pro-rata the *Sunday World* carried significantly more articles than any other paper. The *Sunday World* not only had proportionately the greatest number of articles, they also carried by far the most photographs, publishing photographs or images with each article. Between them the newspapers published 44 photographs in 35 articles. The photographs were of 13 women. Exactly half of the published photographs were of one woman, Catherine Nevin, convicted of conspiracy to murder her husband and sentenced to three consecutive life sentences. Eight of the published photographs were of Deirdre Rose, convicted for her part in the murder of a young man and sentenced to life imprisonment. Deirdre Rose was released after she had served 18 months of her life sentence. Two of the photographs were of Regina Felloni, the drug addicted daughter of convicted drug lord Tony Felloni (see Reynolds: 1998, for a biography of Tony 'King Scum' Felloni). And three of the photographs were of Bridie Doran, who was serving the last years of a life sentence imposed on her in the UK for the murder of her husband. Nine other women had one photograph each published in the newspapers.

To begin with I analysed this data using SPSS. I generated frequencies regarding the number of articles in each paper, the date of the articles, the number of words, the number of images and photographs and the number of journalists, if any, associated with the articles. I wanted some sense of how many journalists were writing about women in prison or about the women's prison in Ireland. I then engaged in a Wordsmith analysis of the data. This analysis gave me frequencies; for example the most common word in the body of headlines and captions was Nevin after Catherine. The next most frequently used word was Rose, referring to Deirdre Rose, also convicted of murder. Other words significant in terms of frequency were evil, killer, murder and

anorexic. These statistics gave me some support for the issues in this analysis, although because the number of articles to emerge from the sample was small these issues were readily emerging in any case. I then engaged in a line-by-line content analysis of the articles and I used a qualitative analysis procedure, borrowed from Grounded Theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and expounded by Strauss and Corbin (1998). This analytical procedure involved three passes through the data: in the first pass, called open coding, the themes in the data are allowed to emerge; in the second pass, called axial coding, connections between individual themes are noted examined and incorporated; and in the third and final pass, called selective coding, the core themes in the data are identified.

Then I engaged in a semiotic analysis, (see Bignall: 2002, Van Zoonen: 1994, Deacon et al: 1999: 132-161). In terms of newspaper consumption, signs and codes of communication through interaction with readership produce meaning. The reader interacts with the text negotiating the text and negotiating the text intertextually. In other words, meaning generated by any one text or photograph is determined by the meaning generated by other texts and photographs, and other media, in the same context. The reader interacts with the text, negotiating the text. John Fiske, (1982: 104), said that there are three ways in which the audience can be said to originate the message: the first is content, if the paper is to receive mass reception it must appeal to matters of general concern, so the audience generates the message and the message in turn reinforces the cultural phenomenon with which it is concerned, re-entering the culture and 'further cultivating this pattern of thought and feeling'; the second is audience expectation, this is based on the relationship the audience has with the newspaper; the third is the fact that the press is a societal institution and as such was generated by the society within which it operates. Fiske and Hartley, (1978), talk the function of mass media in rearticulating 'the main lines of the established cultural consensus about the nature of reality'. In Chapter Five of my thesis, I explore the extent to which newspaper coverage of the women's

prison and the imprisoned women simply rearticulates Ireland's cultural consensus about the nature of those particular realities. Fiske said (1986: 171), 'when signs make myths and values public, they enable them to perform their function of cultural identification'. I consider the ideological and hegemonic aspects of the identities of the women as they are propounded and perpetuated in the press.

#### **3.4(v) Archival Analysis**

In my historic exploration of women's experiences of imprisonment I examined a number of archives and prison records. This involved an analysis of state records and prison records, as well as some private papers and memoirs. The documents in the National Archive and in the National Library were examined, as were documents in the library at Trinity College and the documents in the archive at Kilmainham Jail. The records of women committed to Mountjoy Prison over a period of one year were analysed as were the records of the women imprisoned in The Dochas Centre on one day in March 2001. Taken together with the published works on Ireland's female penal history, these documents provided the data for the historical positioning of the female prison in Ireland, for the statistical mapping of the population of the women's prison, and for the analysis of the subject positioning of Ireland's imprisoned women within historical discourses.

#### **3.4(vi) Discourse Analysis**

From the start of the data analysis process, I analysed the data from the newspapers semiotically. This was to me, from the start, an obvious methodological approach to that data. As my theoretical knowledge deepened I began to comprehend all my data streams as discourses, and I then began to examine all of my data semiotically. There is a dialectical relation between discourse and other social practices and so discourse analysis must include analysis of the material and the structural (Fairclough: 1993, 1995, Sunderland: 2004, Van Leeuwen: 2005). In the final analysis, in my examination of the

discursive subject positioning of Ireland's imprisoned women, I explored all of the discourses in question semiotically. I did this because I wanted to explore the different ways in which the discourses considered in the research communicated in relation to women prisoners, and the different and various communications of each of the discourses.

Semiotics, according to Bignell (2002: 6) is the study of signs in society. He writes (2002: 1), that semiotics is a way of analysing meaning by looking at signs, while signs are the words, pictures, symbols etc. used by people in society to communicate, to make meaning. Bignall says (2002: 13) that the system of signs, structures our experience of reality, and he says that this has implications for the ways in which the self, identity, reality, and society, are understood, (2002: 7, see also Goffman: 1979, and Berger: 1998). Bignall (2002: 7), writes that 'all of our thought and experience, our very sense of our own identity, depends on the systems of signs already existing in society which gives form and meaning to consciousness and reality'. Van Leeuwen (2005: 3), also defines semiotic resources as the actions and artefacts we use to communicate. According to Van Leeuwen (2005: 5), 'studying the semiotic potential of a given semiotic resource is studying how that resource has been, is, and can be, used for the purposes of communication'. Among the obvious means of communication are language, gestures, rules, structures, and hierarchies, among the less obvious perhaps are, for example, dress, everyday objects, and décor. The sample artefacts of dress, everyday objects and décor are part of what Van Leeuwen (2005) calls 'social semiotics'. These social semiotics are loaded with meaning and cultural significance, and they are all part of this research.

Saussure showed that there were two components to every sign, one expresses the sign, it is the signifier; the other is that which the signifier represents, the signified. For example, the written word 'hat' is the signifier for the actual object, hat, the signified. The sign, Bignall writes (2002: 12), is the inseparable

unity of the signifier with the signified. Signs operate at different levels of signification (Deacon et al: 1999: 138). Signs have a function in denoting things, in referring to the *manifest* content of the sign. This is the first level of signification. As well as communicating denotatively, signs also communicate connotatively. This is the second level of signification. Connotation, as described by Deacon et al (1999: 138), constitutes the *latent* content of what the sign may be said to signify. Communicating connotatively, signs trigger a range of ideas and images related to the *manifest* idea and image represented by the sign. At this second level of signification, signs connect with the ways in which society typically regards that which is being signified (Deacon et al: 1999: 138). Through connotation, signs, at the third level of signification, can connect with social consensus, often ideological social consensus, what Barthes termed 'myth' (2000b).

According to Barthes (2000b: 129), myth distorts, it neither lies nor hides nor confesses, it is an inflexion. Myth he holds (2000b: 140), serves the interests of a particular group in society, the bourgeoisie. For Barthes (2000a/b), ways of seeing, ways of representing, people, institutions, societies, and so on, are structured to communicate particular messages. The messages are cultural. They communicate social and political messages about the world. According to Bignall (2002: 21), reading or decoding the messages in myth involves identifying the signs used, showing how they are built, by means of codes, into a structure which communicates selected messages. Bignall goes on to say (2002: 23), that myths make particular social meanings acceptable as the common-sense truth about the world, while analysis of myth involves removing the impression of naturalness by showing how the myth is constructed and showing that it privileges one way of seeing while repressing others. An ideology, according to Bignall (2002: 24, see also Foucault: 1984, Eagleton: 1991, and Sunderland: 2004, in Chapter Two: page 20, of this work), is a way of perceiving reality and society, which assumes that some ideas are self-evidently true and other self-evidently untrue.



It is through the reiterative use of signs, words and phrases, symbols, rituals and behaviours, that social reality is constructed. As Fairclough (1995: 65) states, 'social structures and relations are instantiated in the fine detail of daily social practices'. It is through the reiterative process of constructing the social that roles and identities are constructed. As these roles and identities are constructed, they are appropriated, and ascribed, and they are performed. In my thesis, I examine the discursive subject positioning of the women and the women's presentations of self. I consider the women's identities as they engage with and emerge from engagements with the identities ascribed to the women within the various discourses explored. I consider the ideologies that inform, constrain and produce the women's identities.

### **3.5 The Research Process**

Permission at policy level to conduct the research was granted by Mr. Sean Alyward, then Director General of the Prison Service now Secretary General of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Governor John Lonergan of Mountjoy Prison, Governor Pat Laffan of Limerick Prison, and Assistant Governor, now Governor, Kathleen McMahon of The Dochas Centre. The methodologies chosen for the research were primarily qualitative methodologies fundamentally chosen because they were the most appropriate methodologies for the research. Triangulation of method is employed in this research where the quantitative data collected for the project, in the interviews conducted with the female prisoners and in the documentary and content analyses, supports the qualitative data collected in three sets of interviews, the structured observation and the photographic and documentary analyses. The data collection methods used were appropriate to the aim of the research and the research methodology, the questions asked were valid and they facilitated the collection of the necessary data. Validity in this research was established through the appropriateness of the research design, through the triangulated methodology and data collection methods. It was established through the

completeness of the data, from the response of participants to the research, from my audit trail, and from my prolonged involvement with the women's prison (see Robson: 2002: 170-176). The validity of the research was enhanced through participant verification. My own biases ('no matter how detached or 'scientific' we attempt to be as researchers, we cannot avoid having a role in the action we observe', Cockburn and Mullholland: 2000), are diminished and rendered evident in the reflexive manner in which this thesis is written.

## Chapter Four

### Historical Experiences

In this chapter I examine the discourses of women's experiences of imprisonment over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The chapter historically grounds my thesis. It charts the development of the Irish female prison, and it contains an exploration of the discourses subject positioning the women over that time. The chapter is structured over two centuries in order to facilitate an exploration of the patterns and the changes, if any. In the chapter, I outline the position of women in Irish society. I consider the women's prisons, the philosophies, governance, structures and management of them, and I consider the women imprisoned, the numbers of women imprisoned, the crimes for which they were imprisoned and the sentences imposed on them. I detail the nature of the institutions within which the women were imprisoned. I examine the women's experiences of those institutions, and the manner in which the women engaged with those institutions. The data analysed is from published and archived memoirs, historiographies, prison records and reports.

The total institution in our culture has taken variously the shape of workhouses, hospitals, lunatic asylums, orphanages, monasteries, barracks, gaols, reformatory schools, industrial schools and borstals. In Ireland, as well as prisons, there were lock hospitals used to incarcerated women engaged in or women accused of being engaged in prostitution, and Magdalen laundries, the carcereal appendage of the convent, used here for over a century to encourage conformation in non-conforming women<sup>1</sup>. In the last two centuries women convicted of crimes in Ireland were

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<sup>1</sup> Dobash et al, (1986: 16-17) explain how punishments inflicted upon women were not necessarily ordained by judicial procedure but could emerge from the community or family within which the woman lived: the more serious punishments, branding, boring of the ear, dismemberment of the body, hanging or burning to death were generally inflicted through right of the monarchy or judiciary: women in the middle ages usually committed minor thefts, rarely perpetrated violence, and could use pregnancy to prevent or delay execution, leniency being granted for the sake of the foetus because 'women were merely vessels of the unborn soul': women could be burned to death for adultery or murder of a spouse while male adultery and the murder of wives were not always considered offences; men convicted of murdering their wives suffered hanging only, while women convicted of murdering their husbands were burned to death. Men who allowed their wives to commit adultery or to dominate them would be symbolically punished and publicly shamed, (subjected to a cuckold's court or forced to ride backwards on a donkey). If a man overstepped his role as controller of his wife and family he would be sanctioned by the community in a symbolic manner: on the other hand, women who's behaviour was deemed to warrant community sanction were punished in a way that was 'likely to be more physical, direct and serious', (Dobash et al, 1986: 19).

imprisoned in local and county gaols, and they were transported between 1718 the year of the Transportation Act<sup>2</sup> and 1853. Transportation came to an official end in Ireland in 1853, but it ended earlier for women than for men; according to Carpenter, (1872: 71), the female convicts who had been transported to Western Australia had been 'so bad' the colony had refused to receive any more. The last ship left Ireland in 1856. In 1853 a new punishment, penal servitude, was instituted where formerly criminals had been imprisoned for short periods of time, physically or symbolically punished, executed or transported, they were now to be imprisoned for long periods of time.

#### **4.1 The Nineteenth Century: women in Irish society**

In the 1800's Ireland was a colony of Great Britain. It was an agricultural country characterised by political unrest. Most of the population lived at subsistence level. Throughout that century the country endured food shortages and famine; the ultimate crisis came with the Great Famine of 1845-50. The Great Famine had a substantial impact on Irish prisons; it caused an incarceration crisis<sup>3</sup>. Between 1845 and 1849 the prison population rose from 16,696 to 41,989. The famine radically reduced the national population immediately and dramatically by almost two million people. Many of the two million starved to death. Those who could emigrate did<sup>4</sup>. This population decline through emigration continued through to the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. As the population reduced, the Catholic Church grew in strength, perhaps in response to the dreadful conditions prevailing in the country, and the country's population underwent a devotional revolution, (see Inglis: 1998

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<sup>2</sup> They were first transported to America and then, after the American War of Independence, to Australia and Van Deiman's Land, (Tasmania). From the passing of the 1718 Transportation Act until the outbreak of the American War of Independence, 13,000 Irish criminals, unwanted at home, were transported to the American colonies as 'indentured servants', (Carey: 2000: 2). Dobash et al (1986: 33), detail how convict women were transported as sexual commodities.

<sup>3</sup> The highest numbers of arrests for prostitution in the century coincide with the century's worst famine years. Towards the end of the century through a combination of factors: radical population decline, the devotional revolution, and the imposition of a strict moral code, the numbers of women arrested for prostitution sharply declined, (see Luddy: 1995 and Inglis 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Between 1851 and 1900, 1,941,618 men and 1,789,133 women emigrated, (Luddy: 1995: 13).

Ed: 7). One of the effects of this revolution was the development of a strict and rigidly enforced moral code.

Women in Irish society in the 1800's had a very narrow range of roles. Compared to men they lived very restricted vulnerable lives; women were excluded from politics, political culture was male. Men dominated the public sphere; women were confined to the private sphere. Women did not have the right to vote, neither could they stand for election to political positions<sup>5</sup>. Women joined organisations like temperance societies and rescue missions, providing shelters for women in order to rescue them from drunkenness and prostitution. They visited and supported women in prison and provided shelters for them on their release. Philanthropy became the principal, if largely unpaid, occupation of middle class women in Ireland, (see Luddy: 2001: 199). Women had few employment opportunities, they were unskilled and they had to cope with pregnancies and children. Working class women emigrated from Ireland in large numbers and they were employed abroad primarily as domestic servants. Women who stayed in Ireland earned money when and where they could. They worked at respectable occupations, in the home weaving and spinning, in factories and businesses and working the land for their own and other families. Some women begged, some engaged in huckstering, and some in prostitution<sup>6</sup>.

One effect at that time of the narrowness of opportunity for women, of the weight of their responsibilities and their consequent vulnerabilities, was their propensity, relative to men, to seek shelter. Women in the 1800's were

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<sup>5</sup> Those women who were politically active, as Hayes and Urquhart state, (2001: 28), supported a range of single issues, among them the Contagious Diseases Acts, equal educational opportunities, land reform, and for votes for women, (see Cullen Owens: 2001: 37).

<sup>6</sup> Luddy, (1995), in her study of prostitution in nineteenth century Ireland describes the 'common prostitute' of the 1800's as being poor and uneducated, aged twenty to thirty years. She writes of the casual nature of that occupation, saying that many women would have engaged in prostitution as a temporary occupation, abandoning it when they could. She details the number of women arrested for prostitution between the years 1838 and 1899 in the Dublin Metropolitan District. There were less than 3,000 such arrests in 1838. Almost 5,000 such arrests in 1856, the year with the greatest number of arrests, as the worst effects of the Great Famine affected the population. And less than 500 such arrests in 1899. According to McLoughlin, (2001: 81), economic factors were at that time, central to women's sexual expression<sup>6</sup>. Women exchanged sexual favours within marriage for security. They were controlled in their communities by close observation and gossip. Some women were kept by the men with whom they had affairs and were generally admired for being financially astute. It was lower class women, most of them pauper women, who engaged in prostitution. Women at the time were believed to have no sexual desire, they were compensated by this by a higher moral nature than men, and they were thus responsible for men. Their sexualities were confined to expression within marriage and sexual failings in women were regarded as more serious than in men.

more likely than men to avail of state or philanthropic institutional relief, they were more likely than men to shelter in workhouses and charitable homes, (see Luddy: 1995: 15). Women tended to outnumber men by a 3:1 ratio in workhouses<sup>7</sup>, (see McLoughlin: 2001). The relative propensity of women to seek shelter evidences their extreme marginality. McLoughlin, (2001) writes of the 'wretched' and 'forsaken' women of Dublin, drifting in and out of the workhouse, of women sheltering in the workhouse, of the workhouse being used as a family survival strategy. It is clear that in the 1800's in Ireland women were more vulnerable than men; they had fewer resources and more responsibilities, they had responsibilities they could not easily evade. They had little means through which they could provide for themselves and their dependents. There were a couple of survival strategies available to them. Prostitution was one strategy, for pauper women in particular. Escape through drunkenness another. Many women from time to time, often too weak, too overburdened or overwhelmed by their circumstances sought shelter; thousands of women throughout that century sheltered in prisons.

#### **4.2 Prisons: Policies, Philosophies and Institutions**

Historically punishment in Ireland as elsewhere was a local phenomenon and in Ireland until the late 1700s local bodies called Grand Juries ran prisons. The administration of penality centralised initially in Ireland in 1786 under the auspices of the Inspector General of Prisons, (see McGowan: 1977: 1), who was charged with inspecting all the prisons in the country. Then throughout the 1800's the Grand Juries presented the country's prisons and the financial accounts of the prisons to the Inspectors General who in turn presented these in annual reports to parliament. In 1808 the first annual *Inspector General's Report on the State of the Prisons in Ireland*, was presented to the House of Commons. In 1822 two Inspectors General were appointed and given extra powers. In 1825 these officials divided Ireland into three districts for the purposes of prison inspections, Dublin, and North

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<sup>7</sup> McLoughlin, (2001), details the Irish Poor Relief Act introduced in 1838 which instituted the workhouse as the only relief option for the destitute. In all 163 workhouses, 'utilitarian buildings without comfort and

District and South District<sup>8</sup>. In 1850 the office of *The Inspector of Prisons* was established. *The Board of Directors of the Irish Convict Prisons* was set up in 1854 with Sir Walter Crofton, the prison reformer, (see below), as the first Chair, (Osborough: 1975: 2). Under the General Prisons (Ireland) Act of 1877 *The General Prisons Board* was instituted. It came into being in 1878 and was charged with the management of Ireland's convict and local prisons<sup>9</sup>. The independent Irish state was established in 1922. In 1928 *The General Prisons Board* ceased to exist and responsibility for the nation's prisons was assumed by the Minister for Justice of the government of the new independent Irish state.

In the 1800's penality was built on moral grounds and shaped by three fundamental changes: the increasing centralisation of prisons, the abolishment of transportation to the penal colonies in the 1850's, and the rehabilitative revolution in penality, the emerging philosophical ideas<sup>10</sup> about the purposes of punishment propounded by reformers and Utilitarians, among them Jeremy Bentham, Elizabeth Fry, Sir Walter Crofton and Mary Carpenter. Prisoners were sentenced to prolonged periods of imprisonment during which they were to be encouraged to reflect on the errors of their ways and they were to be brought to correction through admonishment, reflection and by example. Imprisonment was to provide for the reformation and rehabilitation of criminals, it was designed to discipline them to work and industry. It was to be experienced as a punishment and it was to function as a deterrent. While there is evidence in the Reports of the Inspectors General of an acknowledgement of the impact of prevailing social conditions on the circumstances of individual lives, individuals were ultimately deemed to be responsible for themselves, for their actions and for

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ornamentation' each of which could accommodate 3,000 paupers, were built all over Ireland.

<sup>8</sup> In 1825 the prisons inspected were county gaols, district bridewells, smaller bridewells, manor prisons, general penitentiaries, lunatic asylums and convict prison. There were in this inspection 16 prisons in the Dublin district, 68 in the north district and 71 in the south district. The prison visiting circuit was about 3,000 miles.

<sup>9</sup> Responsibility for all prisons and all prison expenditure was henceforth drawn from the Imperial exchequer, (McGowan: 1977).

<sup>10</sup> These penal reformers and philosophers founded Ireland's penitentiary 'on the soundest principles of true wisdom and philanthropy'. These principles were designed by 'moral influence' to 'tend more to bring to the mind a sense of error and moral turpitude than any system of punishment', Report of the Inspectors General.

**‘The pressure is exacerbated by paupers being sent to the prisons from workhouses for offences committed for the express purpose of getting themselves removed to a place where they will be better fed’.**

Prisoners were apparently better fed than paupers. By 1849 the Inspectors General had remedied this situation by preparing a new and ‘lower scale’ diet for general use in prisons, having established ‘with the different medical officers’ that ‘no injury to the health of the prisoners’ would result from the alteration.

All prisoners were classified into four broad categories, debtors, drunkards, vagrants, and felons. Those classified as vagrants, beggars and drunkards, were imprisoned regularly and for short periods of time, generally for 24 or 48 hours. Throughout that century individuals charged with vagrancy, begging and drunkenness were imprisoned in very large numbers, indeed about half of all of those imprisoned every year, in some years more than half<sup>12</sup>, were imprisoned for drunkenness. The gendered class structure of that society, and of the programme of penal reform and reformation, is evident throughout the Reports of the Inspectors General which document the zeal and activity of the upper and middle classes, ‘the county men of Ireland’ and ‘the Protestant Ladies’, in superintending the nation’s prisons and prisoners. Those imprisoned were deemed to ‘belong to a class and caste derived through transmitted hereditary and often progressive criminality’; among them there were said to be ‘two great classes, those who are as it were born onto crime and those who have early fallen into wickedness and have been prematurely hardened’, (Inspectors General Report: 1852).

The first annual *Inspector General’s Report on the State of Irish Prisons*, (1808), discussed the establishment of bridewells, penitentiaries and houses of correction throughout Ireland in which ‘the plan of reformation by means of labour combined with suitable discipline shall be effectively carried into

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secure work and support themselves because of idleness, laziness and other associated personal defects’.



their circumstances<sup>11</sup>. Structural causes of widespread poverty in Ireland were overlooked. Frequently behaviours engaged in for the purposes of survival were constructed as criminal and criminalised individuals were generally imprisoned. Criminalised individuals could, it was believed, be restored to society through discipline and control. In the time spent in detention the individual was to be reformed and restored to society a functioning useful member.

For decades penal policy in Ireland was guided by the reports of the Inspector(s) General and for decades these reports presented parliament with detailed financial accounts which were accompanied, until the later decades of the century, by very few statistics or details of the people imprisoned. This indicates that the finances of the institutions were more important than the numbers, genders and/or experiences of those incarcerated. Throughout the 1800's, as detailed in the Inspector(s) General reports, thousands were imprisoned annually: in 1832, 16,056 were imprisoned; in 1850, when the prisons were experiencing the worst effects of the Great Famine, 115,871 were imprisoned. In their report of 1847 the Inspectors General wrote that 'shoals of vagrants' were drifting into prison from what were officially known at the time as 'pauperised districts'. They wrote that many, represented as criminals, engaged with criminality solely to secure the shelter of the prison. The gaols they wrote were 'crowded with multitudes' and 'classification was impossible'. Illustrating the manner in which poor and destitute people engage with penal institutions they wrote as follows:

**'The calamitous visitation of the last few years, affecting the most opulent and the humblest poor alike, suspending employment and staying the hand of charity, has sorely tried the integrity of our people. Larcenies have multiplied, because ordinarily men will steal food rather than die. Many have notoriously appropriated articles of trifling value that they might obtain the shelter of a prison under the guise of commitment for a criminal offence'.**

Many of those sheltering in workhouses endeavoured to earn themselves a prison sentence. The Inspectors General wrote:

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<sup>11</sup> According to McLoughlin in her writings on nineteenth century Irish pauper women, (2001): 'In an age of laissez-faire individualism, poverty was perceived as an outward manifestation of the failure of individuals to

execution'. The Report of 1818 noted 'the melancholy state of mind of prisoners'; it noted 'the disgusting state of the accommodation', and the 'nearly naked, squalid, sickly, half fed' appearance of the prisoners. It pointed to the tedium of imprisonment, the torpid idleness to which most prisoners were reduced. By 1824 the interior management of prisons was said to have greatly improved. A 'very striking change' was said to have taken place and this was evident in the cleanliness of the yards, day rooms and cells, and in the comparative efficiency and zeal of the officers. By 1825 the interior management of the county gaols was reported to have undergone a very decided change for the better, 'many irregular and even immoral practices' were said to have been corrected with the 'improved character of the officers', and the establishment of schools, schoolmasters in male prisons and school matrons in female prisons<sup>13</sup>. The Inspectors General were fully supportive of the penitentiary system with its panoptic plan and means of classification, but they were critical of what they described as the focus of the 'friends of prison discipline' on the 'architectural advantages of prison' if and where the management of prisons, the internal management of the penitentiaries, was committed to the care of those 'unsuitable, unqualified or indisposed to give effect to the improved system'.

As the eighteenth century progressed and as the work of penal reformers began to take effect, Ireland came to be regarded as having a model prison system. It was known as the Crofton, (after Sir Walter Crofton), or Irish system of prison management<sup>14</sup>. The Crofton system operated through a system of marks whereby prisoners could develop series of privileges. Prisoners were to be trained through dividing their time in prison into three

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<sup>12</sup> In 1843 there were 18,848 criminal convicts, and 20,462 committals for drunkenness, (Inspectors General Report (1846).

<sup>13</sup> Frequently the matron of the prison assumed this role with her other duties. In the Report of 1825 the Inspectors General discussed the role of Matron in the female prisons and they discussed the status accorded to Matrons in women's prisons. Their discussion evidences the responsibilities accorded women in those roles and the injustices and inequalities afforded them in terms of the recognition, status and payment. They wrote: 'we cannot but observe that the salaries granted to matrons are too low. The matron of a county gaol is in fact governess to the female prison, turnkey thereto, work mistress and school mistress, thus comprehending in her duties those which devolve upon four officers at least upon the male side of the prison'.

<sup>14</sup> The Inspectors General were not always entirely supportive of the developments in penality. In 1852 the Inspectors General noted an absence of deterrents in the penal system, they wrote that there were no discomforts, no stigmas affixed through imprisonment. There was in the Report a pondering of the difference between the experience of the workhouse and the factory with the experience of gaols. The gaols were said to be well lighted, warm and ventilated; clothing, bedding and food of the best quality were provided. Medical attendance was at

distinct stages, each managed differently in order to accomplish different objectives. For the men the first stage was nine months separate imprisonment in Mountjoy; the second stage was associated labour on Spike Island; and the third and final stage was spent in what were known as intermediate prisons, such as Smithfield and Lusk. After release, those prisoners who stayed in Ireland were kept under police supervision. The technology of the penitentiary system<sup>15</sup> included separate silent accommodation<sup>16</sup>; prisoners were held in solitude in order to facilitate reflection, and they were to pay their way through work and industry. The architecture and design of the institutions controlled the individuals as did the prisons rules and regulations, structures and routines. Prison discipline was deemed to be intimately connected with prison architecture, with the space that was prison space<sup>17</sup>. Throughout the 1800's as Ireland industrialised and urbanised, prisons became larger and more centrally located. Many new prisons were built, eight county prisons in the 1820's, among them Limerick Prison. Mountjoy Prison was opened in 1850, and Mountjoy Women's Prison, with 450 cells, in 1858.

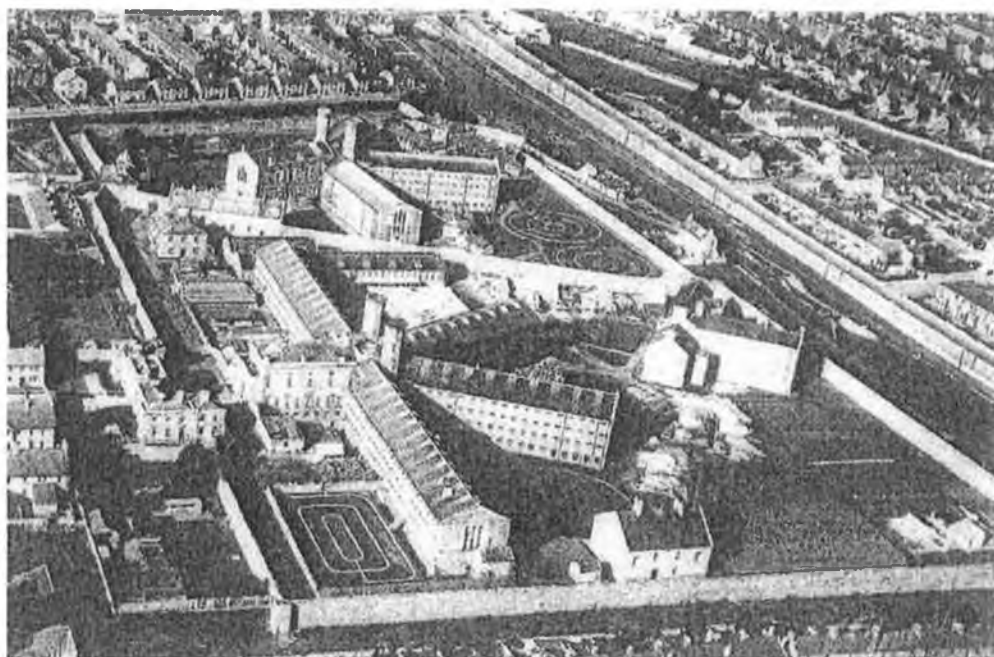
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hand for the most trifling of dispositions and a proportion of money earned was set-aside for the prisoner until release. The industrial, they said, was being confounded with the punitive.

<sup>15</sup> The Report of the Inspectors General of 1834 discusses the Penitentiary Principles from the US from *Mr. Crawford's Report on the American Penitentiaries*, (sanctioned by Parliament). This report documented the establishment in Pennsylvania of a system of solitary confinement, with labour for a long sentence, without labour for a short sentence, in the prisons of Philadelphia, Walnut Street Penitentiary, and in New York, in the state prisons of Auburn and Sing Sing. The technologies of the prisons encompassed punishment and reformation, instruction in letters and trades, general employment and solitary sleeping cells.

<sup>16</sup>The Inspectors General discuss at length both the separate system, the total separation, with constant employment, of prisoners from fellow prisoners, and the silent system, separate confinement of prisoners at night, with associated labour by day under rule of total silence. Crime was believed to be a disease, (Inspectors General Report: 1852), and the only way to protect prisoners from infection and/or further infection was to segregate them. The accommodation of males and females in county gaols was from 1852 to be completely separate.

<sup>17</sup> In 1829 the Inspectors General noted that the prison space comprised a prison yard, a stone floor and simple furniture, straw beds and the blankets of the cell, a vegetable diet or bread or potatoes. In a comment on the condition of the ordinary citizens at the time, they noted that 'it may sometimes happen that a poor man may be induced to prefer the supplies of a gaol to the want he is doomed to suffer in his own home'. They said that given the above prison conditions 'the cottage can only be inferior to the gaol....if it present a state of absolute suffering'. Clearly it frequently did, given the use that poor people frequently made of gaols.



**Photograph 1. Aerial shot Mountjoy Prison 1949: (taken from Carey: 2000: 82). The original women's prison, now St. Patrick's Institution for young male offenders, is the smaller Panopticon to the top of the picture. In the 1990's the cottages to the left and lower middle of the picture were demolished and the site used for the new women's prison, The Dochas Centre.**

### 4.3 The Women Imprisoned

Women were imprisoned in the 1800's in Ireland in a variety of institutions: in the Central Criminal Lunatic Asylum in Dundrum<sup>18</sup> which opened in 1850; in local and County Jails<sup>19</sup>, among them Grangegorman Women's Prison<sup>20</sup>; and in Kilmainham Jail and Mountjoy Prison<sup>21</sup>. Women were imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail in Dublin between 1796 and 1881, women were imprisoned in Port Laois Prison until 1960, women have been

<sup>18</sup>According to Prior, (1997), between 1850 and 1900 only 21% of the 823 individuals committed were women. Only 55 women were committed to Dundrum between 1850 and 1900, (Prior: 1997:225), for killing a person, most of the cases were cases of infanticide; all of the women were poor, most were unmarried. Women guilty of infanticide were represented in the discourses of the institutions as being ill, mad rather than bad. Women's madness was at that time linked to their reproductive systems, (see Chapter Two for an exploration of biologism). Women were represented as being unpredictable, prone to madness, and in need of protection from themselves, (Prior: 1997: 227).

<sup>19</sup> Curtin, (2001), in her study of Galway Jail documents that lower class women were imprisoned in local and county gaols often for short sentences imposed on them for 'crimes against morals', (Curtin: 2001: 67<sup>19</sup>). These crimes involved prostitution and alcohol related offences, minor assaults, petty theft, obscene behaviour, and drunkenness. The imprisoned women were identified by occupation, they were servants, hucksters, charwomen, labourers, prostitutes, beggars or tramps<sup>19</sup>, or they were identified by their husband's occupations. They were 'the blacksmith's wife' or 'the tinker's wife', (2001: 25). Their behaviour was deemed to be immoral rather than criminal but worthy of punishment by imprisonment just the same.

<sup>20</sup> Recorded throughout the various registers and reports of the century also as the Richmond women's prison, Grangegorman Female Penitentiary, Grangegorman Women's Prison and the women's prison at Grangegorman Lane.

<sup>21</sup> Designed by Colonel Joshua Jebb it opened in 1850, (Carey: 2000: 39).

imprisoned in Limerick Prison, the oldest operating prison in Ireland, from 1821 to the present day and in Mountjoy Prison from 1858 to the present day. Mountjoy Women's Prison was and it still is, as I write, the most significant women's prison in Ireland. Women were also imprisoned in convents and hospitals. Sexually deviant women were confined in convent Magdalen Homes and in Lock Hospitals. Women were incarcerated in Magdalen Homes<sup>22</sup> in Ireland from the late 1800's to the late 1900's with Catholic nuns providing the most extensive network of Magdalen Homes, Asylums, Refuges or Laundries<sup>23</sup>. Lock Hospitals were used between 1864 and 1886 for the confinement of women deemed to be prostitutes and found to be infected with venereal disease<sup>24</sup>. The women were confined under *The Contagious Diseases Acts* 1864 and 1866, (see also Finnegan: 2001: 161). These Acts permitted the police to arbitrarily detain women on the streets, prostitutes, and in the case of the 1866 Act, every woman believed to be a prostitute, (see also Curtin: 2001: 83), for medical examination for venereal disease. If the woman was found to be infected, she could be imprisoned in a Lock Hospital for up to nine months<sup>25</sup>. If a woman refused to submit to medical examination she could be imprisoned for up to one month. The Acts operated only in areas of certain military camps in England and Ireland: in Ireland, Cork, Cobh and the Curragh military camps, and, as Luddy points out, (1995: 109), the acts were designed to eradicate venereal disease but applied only to women, soldiers who infected large numbers of women were not treated for venereal disease in confinement as were women. The Acts remained in force until they were suspended<sup>26</sup> in 1883 and finally repealed in 1886. While all of Ireland's institutions had a Christian ethos, this was

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<sup>22</sup> Luddy outlines, (2001: 87), how Magdalen asylums began in Ireland as Dobash et al, (1986: 37), document the beginning of Jonas Hanway's and Robert Dingley's 1758 British establishment, a Magdalen House for the voluntary confinement of penitent prostitutes, designed to provide continuous seclusion, separate cell accommodation and enclosed cubicle chapels for women who were attempting to leave prostitution.

<sup>23</sup> Luddy, (2001), and Finnegan, (2001), detail the numbers of Magdalen asylums in Ireland, at least 11 in Dublin by 1835, 'attempting to reform prostitutes' and more around the country. Luddy points out, (2001:91), that 'these asylums catered for a total of 10,674 women over the period 1800-99'.

<sup>24</sup> The word Lock which derives from the word 'Loke' which meant a house of lepers, was used because of the difficulty in distinguishing venereal disease from leprosy, (Luddy: 1995:105).

<sup>25</sup> The main Lock Hospital, Westmoreland Lock Hospital opened in 1755 and relocated from Ransford Lane in Dublin to Townsend St. in Dublin in 1792: from 1819 it dealt only with female patients, 26,500 patients being treated from 1821 to 1853, (Luddy: 1995: 105-106). The archive of the Westmoreland St. Lock Hospital is now held by the Royal College of Physicians, Kildare St., in Dublin. The archive contains the records of the hospital from its foundation in the 1780's to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When the hospital closed in the 1950's the records for the twentieth century were destroyed. Librarian Robert Mills suggested to me that this was 'probably related to confidentiality concerns'.

particularly the case of female penal institutions. They were run by the state or by philanthropic or religious organisations and managed by women who were supported in their work by lay or religious voluntary middle class philanthropic women.

Women's experiences of imprisonment throughout that century were shaped by the development of the penitentiary system, by the silent separate technology of that system, deemed by all those involved to be particularly effective in disciplining women<sup>27</sup>, by the philosophies regarding imprisoned women of the Quaker prison reformer Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, the Protestant Ladies' Associations, and the Mercy and Charity Sisters; by the separation in prison of the genders; and by the appointment to women's prisons of Matrons and female officers. Mrs. Fry was the person with the greatest influence in terms of shaping women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland in the 1800's. She was immediately followed, in terms of influence, by the Hibernian Ladies' Association, an association of middle and upper class philanthropic protestant women. This organisation was active in the women's prisons in the form of *The Ladies' Visiting Committees*. The Sisters of Mercy laboured throughout the century in the women's prisons and in the provision of shelters and refuges for women leaving prisons. The work of the Sisters never received the same level of commendation in the annual Reports as the labours of the Ladies' Visiting Committees. This may have been perhaps because the Sisters were modest and self-effacing in terms of their work; it may have been that their prison work was deemed to be fundamental to the nature of their vocations. It may also have been a factor of the hierarchical nature of that society where the Protestant Ladies, by virtue of their rank and position in society, rightly shaped women's experiences of imprisonment. Certainly the effusive reports from the Inspectors General on the activities of the Ladies evidence this, as they evidence the tendency of power in society to reinforce power, the tendency

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<sup>26</sup> Finnegan, (2001: 206), noted that an abolitionist objected to the legislation because it was designed in his opinion 'to keep up a healthy supply of women for the gratification of the lusts of immoral men'.

<sup>27</sup> In the Inspectors General Report of 1840 the separate confinement system was said to be established in Grange Gorman Female Prison and it was said to be 'very effective in classes sentenced to very short periods of imprisonment'. It was said that 'the prisoners' bitterest hours are those spent in the commencement of

of hierarchies to self-reinforcement. Despite their effusiveness regarding the work of the Committees of Ladies, the Inspectors General were also assiduous in outlining in the Reports the manner in which they assumed control of those committees. In 1828 the Inspectors General noted that they had, in order to 'add to both the efficacy and number of these associations', organised a meeting of ladies at the Richmond Bridewell under the patronage of the Marchioness of Wellesley. Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, at the insistence of the ladies present, took the chair. At that meeting, under the guidance of the Inspectors General, the ladies formed a central national institution. The Inspectors General set out to 'regulate the proceedings of the ladies associations already formed', and they instituted new associations in several towns. The two main points made at the first meeting, as recorded in the Annual Prison Report, were that female prisoners should be attended by female officers alone, and that the first class of imprisoned women should wear 'a good prison dress, with strict attention to uniformity', while the second class would be issued with 'a more appropriate courser dress'. Mrs. Fry felt that above all, for a woman to be reformed, she must be kept from the other sex. She was firmly committed to the Ladies Committees who in her view, (Inspectors General Report: 1833), effectively managed female prison officers.

**'I find a remarkable difference depending on whether female officers are superintended by ladies or not: I can tell almost as soon as I go into the prison whether they are or not, from the general appearance of both the women and their officers'<sup>28</sup>.**

The Inspectors General remarked that:

**'A great and good effect is produced upon the minds of disgraced and degraded females, by the kindness and countenance of persons of rank and refinement of their own sex. The consequence is that it is in the female class and under committees of ladies, extraordinary instances of prison reformation are to be sought'.**

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confinement, while after time the severity of the separation wears away and the interest in instruction in works and in the visits of officers and in every other instrument of moral reformation increases'.

<sup>28</sup> One of the reasons for this proffered by Mrs. Fry was that the officers tended to be 'not very superior women' neither very high in principle or habit, and they were liable to be contaminated. 'They soon become familiar with the prisoners and cease to excite the respect due to their office. Whereas the ladies go in once, twice or three times a week and the effect produced is decided. Their attendance keeps the female officers in their places, makes them attend to their duty, and has a constant influence on the minds of the prisoners themselves'.

In 1829 the second report of *The Hibernian Ladies' Society* was published and by this time the ladies had managed in many city gaols to affect Mrs. Fry's recommendation that females, as much as possible, 'be confined in buildings wholly separated and distinct from the gaols of the male prisoners', and they were anxious to extend the system<sup>29</sup>. The advantages of such a system were said to be: better means of inspection of the matron and the female assistants; more exclusive attendance by female officers; more convenience for the ladies disposed to visiting women in prison; and the facilitation of sufficient female classification<sup>30</sup>. By 1835 the Ladies' committees were recorded as a formal part of prison services, along with the school and the hospital. *The Ladies' Society* in their policy on the classification of female prisoners stated that:

**'the principle of segregation is to be established not so much according to the offences of which they are respectfully committed as according to their general conduct, character and degree of criminality'.**

The women were not judged with regard to the offence(s) they had committed, but with respect to the selves that they presented within prison.

In the later decades of the 1800's, prison reformer Mary Carpenter wrote in her publication, (1872), that the management of convicted women was one of the prison system's most difficult problems. The organisation of women, both mentally and physically, was, she wrote, (1872: 67), much more sensitive than that of men, and the reformation of women, their restoration to a healthy condition when morally diseased and in an abnormal state, was far more difficult than that of the other sex. The reformation of the women was to be brought about through:

**'firm steady control against which it is evidently hopeless to rebel, combined with a strict and vigilant discipline administered with the most impartial justice'.**  
(Carpenter: 1872: 69)

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<sup>29</sup> Gender segregation in prisons was proposed by Elizabeth Fry in 1827 and enforced in Irish prisons from 1839, (Luddy: 1995: 159).

<sup>30</sup> The higher classes were to be employed in the lighter and most eligible or profitable species of work while the lower classes were to be employed at washing or other more laborious employment. In the lower classes were to be placed vagrants, women of immodest character and women who have children in the goal, unless a separate room could be allotted to them.



Female prisoners were represented by her, (1872), as having low intellectual powers, torpid from under-use. They had very strongly developed passions of the lower nature. They were extremely excitable, violent and given to frantic outbursts of passion. They were, she wrote, capable of a duplicity and disregard for the truth hardly conceivable in the better classes of society; and all of these attributes rendered all attempts to improve these women peculiarly difficult. They needed to be provided with an abundance of active useful work on which they could vent their restless excitable natures. Disciplinary regimes and boring repetitive work were to be used to calm and pacify them. Work would calm their spirits while giving them a sense of accomplishment. Attention was to be paid to their intellectual powers. They were to be taught to read so that their minds could be filled with interesting information, rather than pernicious thoughts. Women's affections were said to be particularly strong, and when perverted, instruments of much evil. If women were to be reformed the 'affectional' part of the woman's nature was to be targeted and won over to the side of virtue. Females were said to be 'more impressionable than males'. The female character was believed to be 'peculiarly open to good or evil influences'. No other 'class of criminals' were said to be 'so easily corrupted and further demoralised by ill-regulated intercourse', nor was there, it was said, (Inspectors General Report: 1837-38), 'any class on whom moral government and instruction produced so rapid and so favourable a change'. It was necessary to be aware of the influence of the female character on the lower ranks of society, and with that in mind, to 'attend with every exertion to promote among them moral and religious improvement, industry and order', (Inspectors General Report: 1829).

There were several different opinions at that time as to which group of women in prison was the most difficult. Mary Carpenter recorded the women engaged in prostitution as the most difficult group of women to deal with in prison. She said, (1872: 68), that:

**'when what is holiest and best in woman has been perverted and diseased by unlawful intercourse with the other sex, there is engendered in her a hardness of heart, a**

**corruption of the whole nature which would seem to make absolute reformation impossible’.**

Mrs. Delia Liddiwell<sup>31</sup>, the Superintendent of Mountjoy Prison, on the other hand, believed that the most difficult female offenders to deal with were:

**‘the young girls who have either been reared in or spent a long period in workhouses. When they are corrected, in even the mildest manner, for any breach of regulations, they seem to lose all control of reason, they break the windows of their cells, tear up their bedding, and in many cases, (where they have been secured before they can do any other mischief), they have torn their clothing with their teeth. Their language while in this state is absolutely shocking’.**

There is strong evidence in this testimony of the performative in the manner in which the young girls presented themselves to that society; this is further evidenced by the following. Ms. Liddiwell went on to say that these girls were intelligent, that they learned as fast if not faster than the other prisoners when in school, and they were generally attentive. They seemed to Ms. Liddiwell to be ‘rather more animated by a most perverse tendency to mischief and a spirit of reckless insubordination, than by a love for actual vice’. The Inspectors General had yet another population in mind in terms of the most difficult or problematic population of female prisoners to manage. They highlighted, (Inspectors General Report: 1851), the problems of old and infirm women in the prison, ‘women not fit for transportation, women who demand much attention from the staff, attentions the staff are not trained to give’. The Inspectors General argued that, contrary to prevailing societal constructions and representations of female criminality, the women’s criminal dispositions were to be attributed in great measure to their extreme poverty. Within prison they said that the women did not engage in serious breaches of discipline, they said that their breaches were generally of a trivial nature, refusing to work, bursts of passion, and communicating with each other. It seems from the evidence that those working within female prisons, given their proximity to and consequent knowledge of female prisoners, did not share or agree with the judgements of those charged with the powers of criminal conviction. While the country’s arbiters of criminal justice constructed and represented the

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<sup>31</sup> She had been Marion Rawlins’ Deputy Matron at Grangegorman, (see below).

activities of these women as criminal, the opinions of those working closest to them were that their criminal activities were in fact no more than manifestations of the women's extreme marginality, (see Wacquant: 2003).

#### **4.4 Conditions and Accommodations**

The following paragraphs evidence the accommodations and condition of women's imprisonment and they evidence the development through the century of those conditions. In the first report of the Inspector General on the state of Irish prisons, (1808), the following was presented as evidence on prison conditions:

**'There is a mixing of prisoners of under every kind of criminal charge, the untried and the convicted promiscuously herded together, from 10 to 12 persons in a cell 12 feet by 8'. The hospital is ill contrived, ill ventilated and totally unsupplied. There is no bath and the privies are offensive and without sewers. There is a scanty allowance of blankets particularly on the female side'.**

The Report of 1809 recorded the gendered nature of prison conditions: male prisoners in Kilmainham Jail were recorded as having iron bedsteads and beds filled with straw in which they slept two to a bed, while female prisoners lay on straw on the flags in the cells and common halls<sup>32</sup>. Between the first and third decades of the 1800's there was a dramatic improvement in prison conditions for both genders. The Report of 1825 found the Depot at Cork to be a very significant prison for the accommodation of female convicts; it was said to be well conducted with female prisoners being instructed and kept constantly employed. The report recorded that the female part of Newgate Prison in Dublin, 'which used to be too dangerous for visitors to pass through', had been transformed, 'idleness, dissipation and licentiousness' had been 'succeeded by industry and order'. The transformation was recorded as 'the effect of the labours of benevolent ladies who gave their attention to that prison'. By 1825 the Inspectors General were able to record that in fact 'no branch of prison discipline has advanced more than that of the female class'. Imprisoned women were apparently relatively easily disciplined and they were said by

the Inspectors General to develop when afforded any opportunity to do so. In terms of effective female prison discipline, the Inspectors General recorded in the Report of 1835 that imprisoned women did in fact 'prefer disorderly habits' and to be imprisoned within prisons where they were 'most miserably accommodated', the ones within which 'there is gaming, drinking and swearing going on'<sup>33</sup>. They went on to record that the well-run prisons, which supplied the women with 'what we may call comfortable decent bedding, fair food, and plenty of employment and instruction'<sup>34</sup>, were the prisons which had the fewest returns.

The reason for this was perhaps the system of separation which was said to be indispensable as an instrument of reformation, particularly for women of the class and character 'from which the inmates of prisons are usually supplied'.

**'To such and particularly to the most violent and abandoned, solitude and silence are insupportable, and those who in association are the loudest and the boldest are, when isolated, completely broken into submission and if not softened to repentance, as is often the case, are at least subdued into a wholesome fear of the recurrence of such seclusion'.**

In 1836 the first prison designed for the confinement solely of female prisoner, the Richmond Female Penitentiary, was established:

**'With the view of reclaiming, by the adoption of a course of improved moral training, the class of females who in large cities crowd the prisons, driven to the commission of crime by want or other circumstances'.**

As it was 'strictly laid down in the Prisons Act that it should not be lawful for any woman to be a keeper of a prison', a male Governor was appointed to manage the institution with a female superintendent, Head Matron Mrs.

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<sup>32</sup> The Report deplored the loss of one of the prison's two infirmaries; it had been let to a prisoner confined for debt.

<sup>33</sup> The Report recorded the erection of a wall in Kilkenny City Prison between the women's prison and the neighbouring brewery, without which, the report said, the prison could not be said to be secure.

<sup>34</sup> In 1826, the Report of the Inspectors General recorded the employments of men imprisoned in the Richmond Penitentiary as follows: shoemakers 10, carpenters 6, weavers 56, tailors 3, labourers in the garden and elsewhere, 13, 90 prisoners in total. The employments of the women were recorded as: washing, 10, shoe-binding 3, needlework 41, knitting 14, 76 prisoners in total. The report of 1851 recorded the employment of males as masons, stone cutters, carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, weavers, smiths, painters, mat-makers, and prison duties, women were employed at needlework, knitting, spinning, washing, care of the sick and prison duties.

Marion Rawlins<sup>35</sup>. The hope was expressed that female prisons throughout the country would 'receive a stimulus from the example of the Grange Gorman Female Penitentiary<sup>36</sup>, (Inspectors General Report 1837). The Report of 1842 documented the penitentiary as being divided into 18 classes, each class with its own Matron exclusively attached to that class. The prison had 256 cells and the Inspectors reported that the women looked exceedingly clean and tidy, their dress and cells in perfect order, the women well behaved.

When the new women's penitentiary at Mountjoy Prison opened in 1858, it was managed through the Crofton or Irish system of prison management. Women imprisoned in Mountjoy Prison served their sentences in three parts<sup>37</sup>. Like the men the women began their sentence in the third class with a period of separation, although they were kept in isolation for four months while the men were isolated for nine months. At the end of the first four months the women entered the second class and they were allowed to have their cell doors open so they could see out onto the corridor. For the women there were no alternative prisons or prison accommodation so they stayed at Mountjoy for the entire period of their sentences. When they were promoted to the first class they worked in the manufacturing of the prison, shirtmaking in the case of Mountjoy prison, or in the prison laundry or at other tasks around the prison. As they progressed through their sentences to release male prisoners moved from the convict prisons to intermediate prisons and from prison custody to police probation<sup>38</sup>. In general female prisoners were not released on license into the community as were men, they moved from prison custody to convent custody.

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<sup>35</sup> Mrs. Rawlins had been appointed by Mrs. Fry, having 'proved her ability in the care of females in Cold Bath Fields Penitentiary', a UK prison.

<sup>36</sup> Grangegorman was originally Richmond General Penitentiary, it was assigned for female prisoners in 1836, (Luddy: 1995: 159), it subsequently became a psychiatric hospital and is now a campus of DIT, (Dublin Institute of Technology). Other posts filled by women at Mountjoy Prison included schoolmistress, laundry matron, class matron and assistant matron, (Luddy: 1995: 160).

<sup>37</sup> Both Luddy, (1995: 161), and Carey, (2000: 81-87), detail how the Crofton system of stages of progressive classification was imposed upon female prisoners in Mountjoy Prison.

<sup>38</sup> The Convict Prisons Board adopted the ideas of the intermediate prison and police probation from the Australian Penal Colonies, (McGowan: 1977: 6).

The *Mountjoy Prison Female Convict Register* details that most of the women were imprisoned for larceny and that most of them, on release, were transferred to the custody of the Sister's of Mercy at Golden Bridge Refuge<sup>39</sup>; a few were discharged from custody. All the evidence in all the Reports documents the fact that the women wanted very much to progress from prison custody to convent custody<sup>40</sup>. There is in this evidence of the performative nature of the women's presentations of self, evidence of the manner in which the women presented themselves within prison, to prison staff and visitors, the Protestant Ladies and the Mercy Sisters. There is in this also of course evidence of the women's extreme marginality. The women were said to 'earnestly and actively seek the shelter of convents'. They were said 'to endeavour to acquire, by strict adherence to the rules, the advantage of removal to the Refuges', (Inspectors General Report 1859); they were said to be afraid that through some misdemeanour they might be barred from the Refuges and so 'be deprived from remaining for some time under the care of the Sisters'. The hope of admission to the refuge was said to work very effectually in disciplining the women, 'rendering their conduct uniform and correct'. The refuges were said to be 'a means of extending the moral good effected by discipline and instruction received in the penitentiary, a means of extending its effects beyond the prison and the period of imprisonment', (Inspectors General Report: 1838)<sup>41</sup>. The need the women had to seek shelter, and the lengths to which they were prepared to go in order to secure that shelter, in particular given the disciplinary nature

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<sup>39</sup>In addition to these refuges an establishment known as the *Shelter for Females Discharged from Prison* was established in 1821 by two Quaker women following the suicide of two women released from prison, (Luddy: 1995: 167 and Carey: 2000: 25), more than fifty years later taken over by the *Dublin Prison Gate Mission*; and there was the *Association for Bettering the Condition of the Female Prisoners in the City and County of Dublin* opened in 1821 under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin, and a refuge established in Cork in the 1820's. There were other refuges for women around the country in the 1800's, (see Finnegan: 2001: 16); the majority of them pursued a policy of emigration for the women they temporarily sheltered, (Luddy: 1995: 169-172).

<sup>40</sup>On leaving prison women were sent to private institutions, convents or philanthropic homes. Two such homes were established in Dublin for the purposes of providing an intermediary control experience for women prisoners. The two institutions were the Sisters of Mercy Convent at Golden Bridge and a Protestant Refuge at Heytesbury St. established by 'some benevolent ladies', (Carpenter: 1872: 77). The refuges were to take the women from the prisons, to further train them in domestic duties and to discipline them into calmness, modesty, honesty and sociability. If the women did not behave they could be returned to prison. If they did behave the managers of the institutions would place them in jobs, or assist them to emigrate furnishing them with references which would enable them to get jobs.

<sup>41</sup>In the Report of 1851 the Inspectors General documented the steps taken by Government to discourage female from entering prison with their children in the hope of securing food and lodging in the prison and a free passage to the colonies through transportation. The Lord Lieutenant decreed that children over two years of age would no longer be permitted to accompany their parents from county gaols. The increase in the number of female criminals was in part attributed to 'this laxity'.

of the shelters, evidences the women's extreme marginality as it evidences the performative in the women's presentations of self within prison.

#### 4.5 Female Criminality in the 1800's

Women imprisoned in Ireland in the 1800's were generally the most marginal women of that society; they were imprisoned in very large numbers, many of them regularly, in different institutions for offences related to their gender roles, clothes related offences and prostitution, and for offences related to their structurally imposed experiences of poverty and deprivation, loitering, vagrancy<sup>42</sup>, begging, and child-related offences. The latter included concealment of birth, exposing children to unnecessary suffering, abandoning children<sup>43</sup> and infanticide. The nature of the offences for which these women were incarcerated, the nature of the institutions within which they were incarcerated and the lives and life experiences which generated their deviancies and deviant behaviours, evidence the marginality of the women and their vulnerabilities within their impoverished existences and experiences.

In the early decades of the 1800's women constituted nearly 25% of the prison population. In 1825, 15,515 were committed for trial<sup>44</sup>, women constituted almost 24%. The figures had risen slightly by 1831, 16,192 were committed for trial, women accounted for 23%. In 1834 21,381 were committed for trial, women constituted 20%. By 1839, a year in which 16,461 individuals were imprisoned for drunkenness, 26,392 were committed for trial, women constituted 31%. In 1843 the numbers had grown again to 20,126 committed for trial, women constituted 32%. In 1847 a total of 75,685 individuals were imprisoned, in 1849, 112,478, in 1850, 115,871, in 1851, 113,554, in 1852, 92,638 in 1853<sup>45</sup> 83,805<sup>46</sup>. In 1856,

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<sup>42</sup> All begging was to be recorded as vagrancy from 1848.

<sup>43</sup> In the Report of 1852 the Inspectors General states that 'the wretchedness and filth of the inhabitations of the poor almost furnish an apology for turning children into the streets'.

<sup>44</sup> 8,571 were convicted, (no gender breakdown available for convictions), and there were 15,515 people in prison, (again no gender breakdown is available).

<sup>45</sup> Carey, (2000:139), details that in 1854, of the 60,000 prisoners in local jails, over 26,000 were women. He broke this statistic down between the provinces and he found that Connaught and Ulster had the fewest women prisoners

when the worst effects of the Great Famine had abated, 48,446 were committed for trial, women constituted 45%. In that year 4,243 women were imprisoned for drunkenness and 4,598 for vagrancy, 4,797 men were imprisoned for drunkenness and 3,001 for vagrancy. In 1860 30,712 were committed for trial, women constituted 46%. In 1869 women accounted for 41% of the 29,879 committed for trial, in 1875 36%, in 1885, 42%. In 1885 there were 82 female convicts in custody and 754 male; 6,442 females were committed for drunkenness and 10,725 males. In 1895, 30,270 people were committed for trial, the lowest numbers since 1843.

For decades women accounted for less than 25% of the annual prison population; then in the mid to late 1840's, as the country became stricken with famine, women very quickly came to constitute almost 50% of the prison population. As the prison population expanded rapidly, the female proportion of that population grew more than the male proportion. It is clear that women to a greater extent than by men used imprisonment as shelter, a survival strategy for both genders at this time. Female criminality in the 1800's was predominantly an urban phenomenon. This is evident in the annual reports of the Inspectors General and it may be explained in part by the relative freedom and anonymity afforded women by the city and in part by the extreme poverty at that time of urban areas. In any case in rural areas fewer women were imprisoned. I found that in 1839 in Cork, nearly half of the population of those committed to prison were female, while over the same time period in Donegal 80 women were imprisoned in comparison to 375 men; in County Galway 248 women were imprisoned<sup>47</sup> in comparison to 912 men, while in Galway city 40 women were imprisoned in comparison

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in comparison to men, while women accounted for the majority of committals to prisons in Leinster. One of the main reasons for this was the large number of prostitutes associated with the garrisons of Dublin and Kildare.

<sup>46</sup> Throughout these famine years classification of prisoners was impossible because of the numbers imprisoned and so there is no breakdown available of the overall figure.

<sup>47</sup>Curtin's, (2001), study of the women of Galway Jail establishes that the women imprisoned there were poor women most of whom were imprisoned often for short sentences imposed on them for 'crimes against morals', (Curtin: 2001: 67): crimes that involved prostitution and alcohol, minor assaults, petty theft, obscene behaviour, drunkenness. The women were identified by occupation, they were servants, hucksters, charwomen, labourers, prostitutes, beggars or tramps, women who 'took to the bag', were a common occurrence at that time, (Curtin: 2001: 31); or in that society, identified by their husband's occupations, they were 'the blacksmith's wife' or 'the tinker's wife', (2001: 25). They were also identified by their behaviour which although deemed to be immoral rather than criminal was judged worthy of punishment by imprisonment just the same. Curtin relies in her work on newspaper coverage in the 1800's for opportunities to hear the voices of potential prisoners and she comments on the satirical or unsympathetic tone of the newspapers, the reporting being structured she says, (2001: 3), for entertainment value rather than hard news value.



to 91 men<sup>48</sup>. I found, (relevant Reports of the Inspectors General), that in the same year, 1839, broadly speaking, both genders engaged in the same types of offences with men committing a great deal more serious crime than women. For both genders most of the criminal offences were larcenies and there was some violent crime<sup>49</sup>. There were very few serious violent crimes such as murder. The national archive also contains *The Irish Crimes Record 1879-1893 'The Return of Outrages specially reported to the Constabulary Office'*. These records of serious crimes record that all of these 'outrages', with only very few exceptions, were committed by men. Women were more generally the victims of the crimes, victims of intimidation, manslaughter or murder<sup>50</sup>.

In 1839 the population of the Richmond Female Penitentiary was recorded as follows: felons, 4,663, vagrants, 3,121, and drunkards, 3,974. The crimes of those classified as felons are detailed in Appendix Seven. The largest group of women were imprisoned for 'having in possession goods (presumably stolen), that was 872 women, the next largest group were in prison for common assault, 322 women, and the next largest group were in prison for receiving stolen goods. The other offences for which the women were imprisoned were property related and alcohol related and one woman had been imprisoned for deserting her child. As detailed in the appendix most of the women, almost one third of them, were imprisoned for drunkenness, the second largest group of committals, again almost one third of the women, were imprisoned for begging. The Report of 1850 noted that 6,292 individuals had that year been committed to the Richmond Female Prison for 24 hours, vagrants, drunkards and beggars. As detailed above, great

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<sup>48</sup> This is supported by Carey's (2000), (see Footnote 30), finding that the greatest number of women imprisoned in the country were imprisoned in the local jails of Dublin and Kildare.

<sup>49</sup> In 1837 a total of 924 women were committed to prison in Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin. The crimes for which they were imprisoned were mainly simple larceny or larceny, one or two were imprisoned for attempted murder or assault, one for concealed birth, a couple for sheep stealing, four for forgery, four for vagrancy and five for misdemeanours. In the county and city of Dublin one was imprisoned for murder, one for manslaughter, one for concealed birth, three for sacrilege, 125 for larceny from a shop, 258 for larceny from a person and 388 for simple larceny. Other offences were assault, burglary, receiving stolen goods, vagrancy and misdemeanours. There were at the same time 1875 men imprisoned, 228 of them for violent crimes including two for murder, three for attempted murder, 10 for manslaughter and 204 for assault, 1505 men were imprisoned for stealing, including 783 for simple larceny, and 59 men were imprisoned on charges of conspiracy to raise the rate of wages.

<sup>50</sup> There is a report in 1880 of the case of Emma Bouchier, servant, who was found by her master, Mr. Brabazon J.P., murdered. Margaret Sheen, a servant recently discharged from service in the house was found in the house in a drunken state. The motive was deemed to be jealousy. The deceased had been employed in Ms Sheen's place. It was proved at the trial that Mr. Brabazon, who was separated from his wife, had been 'improperly intimate' with

numbers of women were sheltering in prison. There was, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, a policy in place 'which would allow no inducement in terms of shelter within the prison', and to discourage sheltering within the prison these committals were offered only 'the gruel dietary'. Beggars who had been committed for 24 hours were not supplied with any food 'unless their exhausted condition should absolutely require it'..., 'to counteract the disposition to seek admittance to a gaol merely for the sake of sustenance and shelter'. Their number was said in the Report to be 'fearfully great', the prison was said to be 'open to contamination' because with the famine came a cholera epidemic. Fears were expressed in the report that there would be a breakdown in order. Mrs Rawlins, Matron of the female prison, called for a refuge 'on an extensive scale' for 'the unfortunate outcasts'.

In 1856 it was reported that 'females through numerically decreased continue to increase their relative proportion to the males and bid fair soon to compose a full half of the aggregate of the criminal population'. In 1859 while the decrease in crime recorded every year since 1850 continued there was said to be an increase in the committals of females for drunkenness. In addition to this, the recommittals of females were said to be three times more numerous than those of males, with 44% of the female offenders said to be older women. In 1869 it was reported that 'abandoned women committed for loitering in the streets and similar offences against public order now constitute the great majority of the prisoners of that sex in custody'. In addition to this it was said that:

**'a small number of females, committed month after month and year after year, occupy the gaols of the country, some spending eight nine and ten months of the year in prison and occasionally recommitted within a few days or perhaps hours after being discharged from a previous imprisonment'.**

In 1880 the medical officer of Mountjoy Female Prison referred in his report to the Inspectors General, published in turn in their report to parliament, of 'a rather remarkable circumstance'. He wrote that the women who had in prison constituted what he referred to as the 'irresponsible class', had not

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Margaret Sheen. Margaret Sheen was arrested, tried at the Spring Assizes in 1880, found guilty of murder and sentenced to penal servitude for life.

been recommitted to prison. The medical officer wrote of the distress occasioned him by these women who at times became excited to such a degree that they 'broke out into paroxysms of passion and violence which rendered it necessary to resort to measures of restraint to prevent them from injuring themselves'. He wrote of seeing a gradual decrease of this class to the great advantage of the discipline of the prison. He also commented on the 'diminution in the recommission of old broken down habitual criminals'. It seems that the desperately unfortunate women of that most extremely marginal generation who had lived their lives through the country's worst famine years, and who had all their lives sheltered in workhouses and prisons, were dying or had died.

In an analysis of the records of women committed to Kilmainham Jail, I found that convict women, who were imprisoned generally in the worst conditions in that institution, were imprisoned for clothes related offences, for prostitution and to a lesser extent for child related offences, (see Appendix Eight). A small minority of women were imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail for loitering, for vagrancy, and for attempted suicide. The last woman imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail, (apart from the female political prisoners of the early 1900's), was committed in 1881, 'her name was Eliza Keenan and she was imprisoned for knocking at a hall door without any proper excuse', (see *Hard Lessons*: 2001: page 8). One or at most two women in some years were imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail for the offence of concealed birth or infanticide. There are very few records of infanticide among the recorded offences of women imprisoned in Ireland and very few records of women having been imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail for that offence<sup>51</sup>.

Among the prison registers in the national archive recording the details of women imprisoned are *The Mountjoy Prison Female Convict Register*<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> McLoughlin explains, (2001: 83), that infanticide and the concealment of births did not come under any sustained official scrutiny in Ireland and Finnegan, (2001: 122), documents the fact that women found guilty of infanticide were generally incarcerated in Convent Magdalen Homes rather than in prisons.

<sup>52</sup> The details recorded are prisoner number, name, age on conviction, crime, sentence and date of conviction, particulars relating to former convictions, information received relative to character in gaol and before conviction, conduct and character in period passed in separate confinement, any offences committed during confinement and any punishments accorded, the woman's class and badge and any observations by the Governor.

1868-1875, *The Register of Vagrants*, *The Register of Old Offenders*, *The Register of Prisoners committed under the Habitual Criminal Act 1869*, the *Register of Female Prisoners Committed for Further Examination* and *The Register of Female Prisoners Grangegorman*. The *Register of Drunkards* records that 6344 women were committed for drunkenness to the Richmond Female Penitentiary in 1839. The women were aged 18 to 74 and they were generally committed to prison for 24 hours, some for 48 hours. Among the women detailed in the *Mountjoy Prison Female Convict Register* are Mary Riley, Mary Duff, Elizabeth Murphy, and Mary Harrington. Mary Riley was sentenced to five years for manslaughter, her character, 'as far as could be learned' was recorded as 'bad', her conduct in her four months separate confinement recorded as 'good'. Mary Duff was sentenced to five years penal servitude for stealing goods and chattels: transferred from Kilkenny Gaol to Mountjoy Prison, she was recorded as: 'a bad character, living in a state of crime, badly instructed regards her religious duties'. Her conduct in her four months separate confinement was recorded as 'good'. She was reported once to the Director for 'talking' and for this offence she lost marks, was reduced to 2<sup>nd</sup> class and was for three days on a bread and water diet<sup>53</sup>. Other punishments recorded in the register include admonishments; three days close confinement, being reported to the Director, and being forced to wear the canvas dress<sup>54</sup>. Elizabeth Murphy was 24 years old and from Kildare, she was sentenced to 7 years transportation for stealing handkerchiefs. Mary Harrington, at 22 years of age and from Cork city, was sentenced to 7 years transportation for vagrancy. Seven years, fourteen years and life were the standard transportation sentences for both genders, and indeed for children over twelve years of age, (see *Hard Lessons: 2002: page 7*); women were routinely sentenced to 7 years transportation for crimes such as wearing stolen apparel, stealing potatoes or stealing ribbon. The women were recorded in the Register as spinsters, servants and washerwomen. Those skilled among them were needle-workers and caterers; they were cape makers, stay makers, lace makers, dressmakers,

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<sup>53</sup> If there wasn't enough room in the ruled register to record all the incidences of misconduct and the punishments accorded the offending woman, the person charged with the recording cut some ruled paper from a copy register, recorded the details on it, and glued it, meticulously, into position in the register.

confectioners and milliners, (see Appendix Seven for details of the prison occupations of women imprisoned in the Richmond Female Prison in 1849).

#### **4.6 Female Imprisonment in the 1800's**

Throughout the 1800's in Ireland women living lives of extreme marginality were imprisoned. They were imprisoned most of them for petty offences, generally public order offences. The institutions within which they were incarcerated were gendered institutions, their regimes designed to discipline them to their feminine roles. One of the most striking features of Irish penality throughout that century is the numbers imprisoned: from 16,000 in 1831, to 100,000 in 1850, to 40,000 in 1880. Another striking feature is the relatively low level of female criminality: in 1825 12,563 men were committed for trial and 2,952 women, in 1828, 11,919 men and 2,800 women, in 1831 13,148 men and 3,044 women, in 1835, 17,376 men and 3,805 women, in 1836, 19,619 men and 4,272 women. Another most striking feature is the numbers of individuals committed to prison for vagrancy, begging and public drunkenness: in 1837 25,443 individuals were imprisoned, 16,461 of them for drunkenness. Yet another striking feature is the experience of imprisonment provided for women, the management and governance of women in prison by privileged volunteers. The final striking feature I wish to highlight is the individual nature of the innovations introduced to Irish penality and the short-lived nature of the changes. In the 1800s the visionaries were Sir Walter Crofton and Elizabeth Fry. Their innovations were admired and replicated internationally, because they apparently worked: the Annual Report of the Directors of Convict Prisons, (1860), records that only 77 of the 1,250 male convicts released on license between March 1856 and March 1860 had their licenses revoked; and by 1860 less than five percent of the women who had passed through the refuges had been recommitted to a convict prison. It is more likely that these accomplishments in terms of recidivism may be attributed to the ending of the famine and to the amelioration generally of conditions in the country, to

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<sup>54</sup> The register documents how women were forced to wear the canvas dress for 'raising their voices' and 'for crying loudly'.

confectioners and milliners, (see Appendix Seven for details of the prison occupations of women imprisoned in the Richmond Female Prison in 1849).

#### **4.6 Female Imprisonment in the 1800's**

Throughout the 1800's in Ireland women living lives of extreme marginality were imprisoned. They were imprisoned most of them for petty offences, generally public order offences. The institutions within which they were incarcerated were gendered institutions, their regimes designed to discipline them to their feminine roles. One of the most striking features of Irish penalty throughout that century is the numbers imprisoned: from 16,000 in 1831, to 100,000 in 1850, to 40,000 in 1880. Another striking feature is the relatively low level of female criminality: in 1825 12,563 men were committed for trial and 2,952 women, in 1828, 11,919 men and 2,800 women, in 1831 13,148 men and 3,044 women, in 1835, 17,376 men and 3,805 women, in 1836, 19,619 men and 4,272 women. Another most striking feature is the numbers of individuals committed to prison for vagrancy, begging and public drunkenness: in 1837 25,443 individuals were imprisoned, 16,461 of them for drunkenness. Yet another striking feature is the experience of imprisonment provided for women, the management and governance of women in prison by privileged volunteers. The final striking feature I wish to highlight is the individual nature of the innovations introduced to Irish penalty and the short-lived nature of the changes. In the 1800s the visionaries were Sir Walter Crofton and Elizabeth Fry. Their innovations were admired and replicated internationally, because they apparently worked: the Annual Report of the Directors of Convict Prisons, (1860), records that only 77 of the 1,250 male convicts released on license between March 1856 and March 1860 had their licenses revoked; and by 1860 less than five percent of the women who had passed through the refuges had been recommitted to a convict prison. It is more likely that these accomplishments in terms of recidivism may be attributed to the ending of the famine and to the amelioration generally of conditions in the country, to

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<sup>54</sup> The register documents how women were forced to wear the canvas dress for 'raising their voices' and 'for crying loudly'.

the likelihood that many of the individuals who had been imprisoned emigrated on release, as well as to the effect of experiences of imprisonment and experiences of innovations in the penal system, in particular the effect of the separate silent system of the penitentiaries. In any case the work of the innovators did not outlive them. In the 1880's the male intermediary prisons closed down, Spike Island in 1883 because of a breakdown in discipline, and Lusk in 1886 because it was deemed to be too expensive to run; in 1883 the men from Spike Island were moved into Mountjoy Women's Prison, it was merged into the male prison, and the women were moved to Grangegorman Women's Prison; in 1891 the women's refuge Goldenbridge closed. In 1897 Grangegorman women's prison was closed, it became the Richmond lunatic asylum, and the women were moved back to Mountjoy Prison. With the passing of the innovative reformers responsibility for prisons and prisoners was left entirely to government officials. These civil servants administered prisons rather than prisoners, and they did this in an efficient albeit expedient manner, without recourse to any carefully thought out and developed policy or philosophy.

#### **4.7 The Twentieth Century: Prisons, Policies, Philosophies and Institutions**

Very little was written in terms of official penal policy in Ireland over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and this can perhaps be attributed to the fact that throughout the century, until the 1980's, the penal system was contracting, the numbers in prison were contracting and many prisons were closed down<sup>55</sup>. In 1923 the Saorstát, (Free State), was established and Kevin O'Higgins<sup>56</sup> was the first

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<sup>55</sup> In 1878 there were 38 prisons and 98 Bridewells in Ireland, and in 1914 there was 'Mountjoy, the Maryborough convict prison (Portlaoise prison), fourteen local prisons, one borstal, (opened in Clonmel in 1906), one Inebriate Reformatory for 'habitual drunkards' and five bridewells in operation', (Carey: 2000: 124-125). In 1922 the outgoing British administration handed Mountjoy prison over to the Irish Provisional Government, one of eleven prisons in southern Ireland, encompassing a total of 2,361 prison places accommodating at the time less than 600 prisoners, (Carey: 2000: 130). In 1956, there were just three prisons in Ireland, Mountjoy and Limerick prisons, for men and women, and Portlaoise Prison, (Carey: 2000: 206), four in 1958 according to O'Mahony, (1993: 88), who includes St Patrick's Institution, the young offenders facility, as a separate prison in his calculation.

<sup>56</sup> Kevin O'Higgins was assassinated 10 July 1927. His daughter Una O'Higgins O'Malley worked on the McBride Commission of Enquiry into the Penal System (1982).

Minister for Justice<sup>57</sup>. In 1928 the *General Prisons Board* was dissolved and the powers of the board were transferred to the Minister for Justice. There were at that time seven local prisons; two convict prisons, Portlaoise and Mountjoy, and the Borstal in Clonmel. The Board had closed all the bridewells, (see Annual Prisons Report: 1928). In terms of policy, the most critical document<sup>58</sup> of the twentieth century is the 1947 *Rules for the Government of Prisons*. These rules reformed penal regimes, they are concerned with the administrative necessities of the prisons, and they are by now, although still used, very outdated. Analyses of penal policy in Ireland are contained four reports. The McBride Report, (*Crime and Punishment: The Irish Penal System Commission Report: 1982*) which was commissioned by the Prisoners Rights Organisation. The report noted (1982: 93), the relatively low numbers of women in prison, (daily average of 24 women in 1974), and the relatively petty nature of the offences of those imprisoned. The second report was from the Council for Social Welfare: A Committee of the Catholic Bishops Conference the 1983 report on *The Prison System*. This report commented on the deplorable, inadequate, and overcrowded conditions of the female prison. The daily average in 1981 of 23 women, (1983: 11), were imprisoned in the ground floor wing of St. Patrick's Institution, (1983: 17). The 1985 Whittaker Report, (*Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Penal System*), was commissioned by the Irish government, and then much ignored by it. The report highlighted as the core problem the overuse of imprisonment<sup>59</sup>, the limited 'protective, deterrent, or corrective value of imprisonment, and the expense of it (1985: 11). The Report recommended a range of non-custodial penalties, among them confiscation of assets, required attendance at drug and alcohol treatment centres, and restraints on liberty operable within the community. The report called for, as a matter of priority, the replacement of

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<sup>57</sup> The military authorities had taken over most of the prisons and were using them for internees. The Report of 1922 recorded that only limited space could be allocated to civil prisoners, that the new police force, the Garda, had yet to be fully established, and consequently ordinary lawbreakers was able to evade arrest.

<sup>58</sup> The twentieth century legislative framework for the management of prisons and prisoners is as follows: The Prisons (Ireland) Act 1907, The Children's Act 1908, The Criminal Justice Administration Act 1914, The Visiting Committee Act 1925, the Criminal Justice Acts 1925, 1951, 1960, (Miscellaneous Provisions) 1997, The Prisons Acts 1972, 1974, 1977, 1980, and the Transfer of Sentenced Prisoner Acts of 1995 and 1997, (see Byrne et al: 1981, for a complete list of statutes and statutory instruments).

<sup>59</sup> In the report imprisonment is described, (1985: 38), as 'the gravest penalty', 'involving as it does the withdrawal of one of the most fundamental human rights, that to liberty'.



the 'existing sub-standard accommodation of imprisoned women and recommended that most women offenders be accommodated in an open centre, (1985: 14). In 1994 the first major document on prison policy in the history of the state was published, the Prison Service's five year plan, the *Management of Offenders*. This document details as one of the measures to be implemented in the coming five years the provision of 60 places for women prisoners in a purpose-built facility. The document also promises a programme of *Positive Sentence Management* within which a range of services and facilities will be made available to offenders: 'to help them cope with their sentences, to preserve their physical and mental well-being, and to prepare them, as far as practicable, for early structured release under supervision' 'if justified and earned', (1994: 40). The Report goes on to say, (same page), that:

**'the case of each offender usually presents a unique set of circumstances – upbringing, family relationships, nature and circumstances of the offence, willingness and capacity to make good – which may be expected to be reflected in his/her development programme and in the selection of a date for early release'.**

A published discussion paper *Tackling Crime*, (Department of Justice: 1997), stated as a major impediment to the effectiveness in law enforcement the absence of an adequate number of prison places. Throughout the century penal policy was designed to manage what was a shrinking prison population in a developing country, and towards the end of the century, a growing and globalising prison population in a developed country.

From the 1900's the penal regime liberalised. In the 1940's a number of concessions were introduced, associated recreation, prisoners were allowed smoke, and they were allowed to wear their own clothes. The Prison Rules of 1947 replaced the nineteenth century separate rules for convict and local prisons and rules on penal servitude and hard labour were dropped. In the 1970's there were changes in accommodations, structures and facilities<sup>60</sup>. New institutions, more open institutions, were introduced. There were

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<sup>60</sup> Osborough, (1985: 188), drew a relationship between awakening public interest and innovations in prison policy, suggesting that the Kennedy report, (1970), a major, (and damning), report on the reformatory and industrial school system, encouraged a public focus on the situation of adults in penal institutions.

developments in the spheres of education work and welfare. The power of temporary release was granted. Education units were opened and industrial training courses were introduced. The three major reports on prisons of the 1980's, (two of them non-Governmental, the McBride Report and the Catholic Bishops), document the philosophies of Irish prisons, among them the philosophy that prisoners should be held in safe humane secure custody and that prison should be the punishment of last resort. The reports also document the inappropriate use of imprisonment, the shortcomings of prison as a deterrent, and the shortcomings of the accommodations and facilities of Irish prisons, most of which were, and still are, housed in nineteenth century buildings.

The prison population began to diminish from the late 1800's and the numbers had fallen dramatically by the mid 1900's. This was particularly the case in women's imprisonment. In 1914-15, 7,773 women were committed to prison, 33% of the total prison population. In the Annual Report on prisons for that year the low numbers in prison were attributed to 'the depletion of the male population due to war, the greater prosperity in agriculture, the higher wages and increased employment in industrial areas, and the granting of time for the payment of fines under the Criminal Justice Administration Act of 1914<sup>61</sup>. By 1930 the number of women in prison was down to 917, 22% of the prison population<sup>62</sup>; by 1935, this was down to 666, 17%<sup>63</sup>. In the Annual Prison report of 1937, the Minister for Justice noted the 'decline in the number of persons being sent to prison on conviction continues to be much more marked in the case of women'. The number of women received on conviction that year was 301, 44% less than

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<sup>61</sup> Carey, (2000: 130), attributes the decline in the prison population 'first and foremost' to legislative changes that affected imprisonment: the 1907 Probation of Offenders Act, 9 which replaced the Probation of First Offenders Act, 1887), the Fine or Imprisonment Act 1899 (which provided for the reduction of sentence on part payment of a fine), the 1907 Prisons Act (which authorised partial remission of sentences for good conduct and industry) and the 1914 Criminal Justice Administration Act which allowed extra time for the payment of fines. As Carey states, these pieces of legislation all combined to significantly reduce the prison population. The reduction in the prison population in the early 1900's was also due to a shrinking national population, through death and emigration. It was due to a buoyant war-time economy in the second decade of the century, to the enlistment of many men, and to a focus by the State on the imprisonment of political prisoners. It was also attributable to a general development in living standards.

<sup>62</sup> The daily average prison population for this year was down 8% on the daily average of the preceding year.

<sup>63</sup> In 1934 separate confinement during the first months of a penal servitude sentence was abolished.

the annual average for the four preceding years<sup>64</sup>. In 1949 a 'Holy Year' amnesty was granted. The Annual Prison Report of that year details that:

**'the Minister for Justice, with the approval of the government, granted certain remissions.....to mark the beginning of Holy Year and as an indication of the Governments complete harmony with the spirit of the Holy season'**<sup>65</sup>.

By the mid decades of the twentieth century large recidivism rates<sup>66</sup> among the diminishing population of imprisoned women were being highlighted in the Annual Prison Reports. In 1950, 353 women were imprisoned, they constituted 16% of the prison population, 60% of them had served more than five previous sentences including 112 who had been committed to prison more than 20 times. In 1955 71% of the female prisoners had served more than five prison sentences, including 130 who had served more than 20. In 1960, 225 women were imprisoned, they constituted 11% of the entire prison population and 64% of them had served more than five

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<sup>64</sup> In 1946 there was a 7% decrease in the prison population on the preceding year. The practice of allowing prisoners to receive parcels containing fruitcake, sweets and other small luxuries was introduced this year. In 1947, 2052 books were bought for prison libraries, 600 books were received from members of the public. Smoking privileges were granted to prisoners.

<sup>65</sup> The Catholic Church was and is a patriarchy. It was and it is a male institution. It provided for the people in return for support acceptance and obedience. The habitus of the society the nation and the State was Catholic. Catholic habitus, (Ingليس: 1998 Ed.: 11), embodied in the home the school and the church, produced specific Catholic, religious and ethical, ways of being. Being a good Catholic facilitated the legitimate accumulation of economic cultural political and social capital. The church regulated social interaction and made decisions about education and work, about appointments and leadership. Political leaders and civil servants were socialised into this Catholic habitus. Through them the Catholic Church influenced the State; it controlled the State. In effect the State was Irish Catholic. Throughout the twentieth century Ireland was a Catholic State. There was a particular devotion to Mariology, and through this the ideal of Irish womanhood was represented in motherhood, home and family. Ingليس, (1998 Ed.: 100), posits that Irish mothers had a pivotal role in Irish Catholicism, acting as the link between the institutional Church and ordinary society, and developing vocations in their children. The ideal of Irish womanhood became manifest in a series of repressive legislation, (see Beaumont: 1999 and Scannell: 2001): in 1924 and 1927 legislation was introduced to restrict women's right to sit on juries; in 1927 women's right to sit all examinations in the Civil Service was curtailed; in 1932 the marriage bar was introduced where married women were obliged to resign from all Civil Service positions; in 1935 the Government assumed the right to limit women's employment in any given industry; and in 1937 the Constitution defined women's role in the state exclusively in terms of the family, hearth and home. An oppressive vision of the ideal of Irish womanhood of which sexual purity was a primary characteristic took hold, (see Valiulis: 1995: 172). As the century progressed for most women in Ireland controlling or attempting to control their own destinies the only route available was emigration and women emigrated from Ireland during these years in vast numbers. Emigration from Ireland over the last two centuries was a predominantly female phenomenon and emigration was such in the mid twentieth century that a Commission on Emigration was established, (Travers: 1995a: 191, Travers: 1995b: 150). Travers outlined the conclusion of the Commission that young people, more than two thirds of them women, were emigrating to 'escape the drabness of the average Irish village, with its frustrations, inhibitions and sterile outlook': and even DeValera, then Taoiseach, (Prime Minister), and later President, when faced with explaining why two thirds of the emigrants were women, was forced to concede that there were reasons other than employment. The women who stayed conformed, led the charge for conformity, or they fell foul of the orthodoxies of the day.

<sup>66</sup> In 1912-1913 the female prison at Mountjoy took 4,780 committals, mostly for petty crimes at a time when nearly half of the women would have previously been committed to prison under sentence more than twenty times, Carey, (2000: 139). Carey, (2000: 137-140), in his brief historical analysis of the imprisonment of women in Mountjoy attributed high recidivism rates among the women in Mountjoy to the fact that women found it difficult to shake the habits of criminality once established and to the particular difficulty imprisoned women experienced in trying to re-establish themselves in legitimate society after a term in prison. 'Many of the women were imprisoned so often they were effectively doing what penal historian Sean McConville described as 'life by instalments'', (Carey: 2000: 138), highlighting the 'little and often' syndrome of female imprisonment in Ireland'.

previous sentences, including 100 who had served more than 20. In 1965, of 343 female prisoners, 45% of the women imprisoned had previously served more than five prison sentence, including 90 who had served more than 20. In 1970 of 273 female prisoners, 41% had previously served more than five prison sentences, including 30 who had served more than 20. In 1975, of 176 female prisoners, 30% had previously served more than five sentences, including 5% who had previously served more than 20. In 1981 a total of 111 women were imprisoned, constituting 4.7% of the entire prison population; by 1990 imprisoned women constituted less than 3% of the prison population (see Appendix 12). The sharply diminishing numbers in the late 1970's of strong recidivists is, I suggest, a repeat of a pattern established in the 1800's, where that particular population of extremely marginal women, who had all their lives sheltered in prisons, were dying or had died. The diminishing numbers of women in prison over the 1900's is a manifestation of the nation's economic and social development, a manifestation of the diminished need of women to shelter in prisons. It is a reflection of the emigration from Ireland of vast numbers of women and it evidences the low level generally of female criminality. Above all the diminishing numbers of women in prison evidence the control wielded in Irish society by the Catholic Church and the construction of the feminine within Irish Catholicism throughout the century, (see Inglis: 1998). Throughout the twentieth century, due to falling numbers of imprisoned women, most of Ireland's women's prisons closed down: Galway's women's prison closed in 1930; Waterford and Dundalk in 1935; Cork in 1940; Sligo in 1950; and Port Laois Prison stopped accommodating women in 1960; this left Mountjoy and Limerick Female Prisons as the only women's prisons in Ireland, (see Appendix Nine). The daily Irish female prison population was down to 20 by 1960 and down to 14 by 1970. In 1970 Mountjoy Female Prison held on average 15 imprisoned women daily and Limerick Female Prison held three<sup>67</sup>. After the all-time low of 1970 the

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<sup>67</sup> This phenomenon of low numbers of women in prison through these years was recorded internationally; Chesney-Lind, (1991: 54-55) recorded a similar pattern in the US, as did Heidensohn, (1985: 44), in the UK; indeed Carlen, (1985: 182), noted that a Home Office report in 1970 estimated that by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fewer women, perhaps no women at all would receive prison sentences.

numbers of women in prison began to rise again, to the current daily average of 100 women in prison.

As will be seen the very few women who were imprisoned over this century were imprisoned in the worst most restricted conditions within Irish prisons, restricted in terms of the number, type and condition of the prisons to which women might be committed and restricted in terms of the occupations available to women imprisoned within them. In 1956 the borstal, an institution for offenders aged 15 to 21, closed in Clonmel as did other state industrial schools<sup>68</sup>, and the female prison at Mountjoy, due to the falling numbers of imprisoned women, was converted into a facility for young offenders. It became St. Patrick's Institution.

**'In the 1950's and '60's the number of women started to reduce as the stealing issue went away, the women had social welfare and it was some support. They (the Government) closed down Daingean and Letterfrack<sup>69</sup>, places like that, (industrial schools), institutions for young boys and they decided to move the boys into the female prison. They turned the female prison into a juvenile institution and we, (the women's prison), got one floor of the B wing of St Patrick's Institution. The B-wing couldn't accommodate more than twenty women; (this was then the biggest of two women's prisons in the country), we didn't need to accommodate any more. When I joined in 1976 there were on average 16 to 20 women in custody every day. In 1979 that number dropped to three. Quite an amount of women were coming in for prostitution<sup>70</sup> and shoplifting. There were one or two in for more serious crimes, embezzlement or fraud, membership of an illegal organisation. It was mostly prostitution and shoplifting. That was 1979. Then in 1980, 1981, the drug situation exploded in the city and we went from an average of 16-20 women to 30-40 women in that small area. We had to put bunk beds in the cells. (Assistant Governor Dochas Centre Catherine Comerford in interview with author).**

In 1985 the Whittaker Report noted that the two women's prisons, Mountjoy and Limerick, were in poor physical condition with inadequate medical, work, educational and recreation facilities and no provision whatsoever for training; the Report, (Table 3: page 252), details of activities in all prisons in terms of work skills and training. In Mountjoy Women's Prison the women were engaged in machine knitting, sewing and prison chores, in Limerick Women's Prison the women were engaged in prison

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<sup>68</sup> The history of Ireland's industrial schools is documented by Rafferty and O'Sullivan, in their book 'Suffer Little Children' (1999).

<sup>69</sup> In fact Letterfrack closed in 1973 and Daingean in 1974.

<sup>70</sup> In the Annual Report of 1945, the numbers of females under 21 years of age committed on conviction for soliciting and allied offences was 26. This fact was commented upon in a note from the Minister. It was commented upon again in 1948, this year there were 18 females committed for soliciting.

chores<sup>71</sup>. Assistant Governor Catherine Comerford described the conditions within the prison at that time in interview with me as follows:

**'The numbers increased again in 1986. That was when the first prisoners were identified as having HIV and a place had to be found for them. That was a horrible couple of years. All the women who were HIV positive assumed they were going to die in 12 months and nothing we could say could ease their pain. People at that time were terrified of that disease, it was deadly and highly contagious, you could pick it up by walking into a room. The staff were absolutely terrified. They wanted to wear suits, gloves and masks. It had a devastating effect on the prison. The women would cut their legs and fill their cups with blood, ring the bell and when we opened the door the contents of the cup would come flying at us. We were very scared. Some of the women got very ill, took overdoses and died. It was just too much for them. We were hearing every week of women dying'.**

The Whittaker report, (1985: 76), made recommendations for the women's prison in terms of adequate health care, facilities within the prison for childcare, back-up psychiatric care, drug and alcohol treatment programmes, a full welfare service programme, specialist counselling services, purposeful work activities, certified skills training and a full education programme. The Report noted that advances made in male prisons in terms of education work and training had not been made in the women's prisons<sup>72</sup>, (1985: 77). A sense of the nature of the women's experiences within that prison and the identities and subjectivities ascribed to women in prison at that time by the state and by society generally may be extrapolated from the 1985 report on prisons published by the Department of Justice, (Annual Prison Report: 1985). The report commented on the very welcome addition to the female prison of a sewing room, 'as bright and cheerful as the knitting room', and the report described as 'a major development' in the female prison, the allocation of two female prison officers to groups of four offenders to act in a house mother capacity: where male prisoners were guarded by officers and Governors, female prisoners were to be guarded by house mothers and

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<sup>71</sup> At the same time men were engaged in the following: joinery, metalwork, upholstery, leatherwork, tailoring, shoe repair, catering, baking, community building work, assembly work, woodwork, physical training, clothing manufacture, industrial training in engineering manufacture, craft work, printing, Braille and 'talking-book'-production, equipment repair, woolcraft, screen printing, computer-based training, industrial training in electronics, drawing, car driving, heavy goods vehicle driving, apprenticeships, farming, ground works, building renovation, gardening, horticulture, animal husbandry and marquetry.

<sup>72</sup> To understand Irish society at that time it is helpful to consider the publication of 'Irish Women: Agenda for Practical Action', which details, (1985: 22-23), the legal concerns of women in Ireland at that time; women were concerned with legislation on matrimonial property, with the legal issue of illegitimacy, with attempting to secure legislation on divorce or judicial separation, on conjugal rights, with campaigning for the legalisation of family planning, and with children's rights.

matrons, underpinning the idea of women as ill, as domestic and as familial. As their numbers increased again, through the increased imprisonment of women on drug charges, the women in Mountjoy Prison were moved in 1990 to D-wing, a wing of the young offenders' institution<sup>73</sup>, a corridor of cells built on three levels which was refurbished for them, (see Chapter Three for more detail).



**Photograph Two: Mountjoy Prison 1993, (possibly a view of the women's prison): from 'Cell': A Calypso Production, (1999), photograph by Derek Speirs**

**'The women's prison subsequently moved to the D wing. The women were given a bath once a week, there were no showers. They were given a change of clothes, underwear and outer clothing once a week. They got one shampoo and one soap once a week. They had to ask me, (I was Chief Officer at the time), or somebody else if they could have two sanitary towels when they had their period. They came to you in the office and you took two sanitary towels wrapped them up paper gave them to the woman and recorded it.' (One of the teachers in the school remembered that the women 'had to produce dirty sanitary towels to get a clean one': Teacher the Dochas**

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<sup>73</sup> 'I'm recollecting the conditions which I inherited in 1993, where the women were literally caged in one corner of the male juvenile prison', (Director General of the Prison Service Sean Alyward, in interview with the author).

Centre in interview with me). By 1980 with the explosion in the drugs problem we had put showers in, the women could wear their own clothes, we had a laundry, we didn't need to send clothes out to be washed and ironed. They could wear jewellery, watches came later.

(Assistant Governor Catherine Comerford in interview with me).

Governor Lonergan, in interview with me, described that prison as follows:

**'They refurbished it very much the way St Pats was being refurbished, with a huge emphasis on gangways and wire. They did away with all the grass that was in the exercise yard and tarmacadamed all of it. They put big wire fences up all around and had a cage put up from the wing to the exercise yard, like they, (the women in the prison), were monkeys or tigers or lions or something. The whole environment was wrong. Anyway it seemed that something needed to be done'.**

The women remained there<sup>74</sup>, until 1999. Taylor Black, (Programme One: 1997), recorded a female prison officer in that female wing of St. Patrick's Institution enumerating the number of female offenders in the system at that time as follows: 38 females in the prison, 42 females on TR, (temporary release) 109 females at large, (unlawfully free), and 7 females on remand, (in prison awaiting sentencing). Sean Alyward, Director General of the Prison Service at the time of interview, in interview with me described the facilities of that prison as follows:

**'I can remember the sheer lack of activity. The basement area of it had an ironing board and a couple of washing machines and there were two or three women loading or unloading baskets and ironing and the rest of the girls were chatting. Then over in the educational facility, which was just a few pre-fabs, the range of activities was pathetic. There were a few teachers doing literacy work, a few women sewing Dubarry shoes', (piecework), 'and a few women were sewing quilts etc. Like the rest of the prison system there weren't enough places and when prisoner numbers would reach 30 or 40 the Chief,' (Kathleen McMahon, now Governor of the Dochas Centre), 'would be on to me saying, 'for God's sake would you let some of them out'. The revolving door was in full swing and they (the women) were spinning in and out. The Doctor's surgery was a converted cell, the little oratory it was a converted cell, conditions were poor, lighting was poor, the gym area had a low ceiling, it was just four cells knocked together'.**

In 1993 the Second Commission on the status of women published their account of their visit to the Women's Prison in Mountjoy Jail: there were at that time about 35 women in custody on any day, most of them imprisoned for drug-related offences. The report of the Commission noted that the recommendations of the Whittaker Report, (1985), still needed to be addressed.



In 1999 the women were moved into the new purpose built female prison the Dochas Centre<sup>75</sup>. The Dochas Centre, like the innovations of the 1800's, is a product of a vision of a penal reformer, Governor John Lonergan, for women in prison. This vision was shared by some officials in the Prison Service, by many members of staff of the women's prison at Mountjoy, and by two successive female Ministers for Justice, Nora Owen and Maire Geoghegan-Quinn. The prison took years to develop, as well as the building itself there is the entire social structure of the institution, (see Quinlan: 2004).



**Photograph Three: The Dochas Centre: the new women's prison at Mountjoy Prison which opened 1999**

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<sup>74</sup> The experiences this accommodation afforded the women during this time have been documented by Alan Roberts, (1997), in his novel *The Rasherhouse*.

<sup>75</sup> Dochas is Irish for hope. The prison was named by my friend Tara O'Callaghan, (see Chapter Three).

The prison was officially opened by the Minister For Justice Sean O'Donoghue in September 1999, it cost 30 million pounds to build and it has a capacity for 79 women, twice the numbers of female prisoners the old wing of St Patrick's Institution could accommodate, (see Appendix One for a list of Irish prisons). The prison was designed to be a 'family or home' style<sup>76</sup> prison. Within the prison women are accommodated in seven separate houses, each house accommodating 10 to 12 women, except Cedar House which can accommodate 18 women and Phoenix which is the pre-release centre. In the houses each woman has her own room, all the rooms are en-suite, and the women have keys to their rooms and degrees of freedom in terms of movement about the prison. Some women are accommodated within the prison's Healthcare Unit, some in the padded or strip cells, with their referents for madness<sup>77</sup>, of which there are four, one strip and three padded<sup>78</sup>, in the healthcare unit when the prison is overcrowded<sup>79</sup>. The prison holds women on remand and sentenced women.

In a radically different penal establishment the twelve women incarcerated in Limerick Prison, (the oldest operating prison in Ireland), in January 2001 were held in a tiny wing of the prison, a small corridor of prison cells accommodated on three levels. The Council of Europe Committee had condemned the situation of the women held in Limerick Prison through the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment; (see CPT/Inf (99) 15: 10), the women's conditions have also been condemned to me by the Director General of the Prison Service<sup>80</sup>, by prison staff<sup>81</sup> and by all I met who visited them.

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<sup>76</sup> Described thus generally to me by staff of the prison.

<sup>77</sup> Despite the suggestion in the literature and in this chapter of high levels of mental illness among women prisoners only three women prisoners at a time in Ireland can avail of psychiatric care in a psychiatric hospital, and at that only in the Central Mental Hospital, the most secure of Ireland's psychiatric facilities. There is a visiting psychiatric facility at the Dochas Centre and a very limited visiting facility in Limerick Prison.

<sup>78</sup> Historian Peter Carey in interview with me said that historically: 'the women were very hard to handle compared to the men, they were really really wild, again it was their treatment of the women and their attitudes towards them that would have reinforced all this'. And then he asked: 'the Dochas Centre has how many padded cells'?

<sup>79</sup> The CPT, (European Committee for the Prevention of Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment), (CPT/Inf (2003) 36: page 22), highlighted the practice in the Dochas Centre when the prison was overcrowded of accommodating imprisoned women in padded cells. The CPT requested information on measures taken to ensure that all prisoners at the Dochas Centre are provided with appropriate accommodation.

<sup>80</sup> In Limerick Prison...they', (the imprisoned women), 'are in very confined quarters. We would close the place altogether except for the fact that there are women prisoners who want to be there in order to be close to their families. It's a terrible place', (Director General of the Prison Service Sean Alyward, in interview with me).

<sup>81</sup> An officer at Limerick Prison, commenting on the accommodation of the women in C wing in that prison, said that it would not be possible to 'manage a sentence' in C wing as it was, he said: 'it is simply just watch the days



**Photograph Four: The path to the female wing of Limerick Prison (2003)**

The ground floor of the wing encompassed a big shabby draught-ridden room where the women worked on crafts, and a shed-like room, a food servery, where the women received their meals. The food servery had a small free-standing food service unit with four serving trays and one free-standing domestic washing machine. There was no other furniture or

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go by and mark it with meals'. He said that the conditions within which the women were being held were 'dreadful, a disgrace, indefensible', and he said that he was at a loss to know how the women had managed to survive in those conditions as long as they had.

decoration in the room. The walls were not painted; the cement floor was not covered. The women's cells on the first floor, four in all, were very small and contained bunk beds to accommodate women who must share a cell. The second floor of the tiny wing contained the five cells of the women who enjoyed single occupancy cells. The cells had no in-cell sanitation. The women had a very shabby recreation room with a snooker table and a tiny 'schoolroom' with one computer, the schoolroom had to be vacated to accommodate professional visits to the women when necessary. The women's recreation yard was a small rectangular area enclosed by forty-foot high metal walls. When male prisoners in adjacent yards played ball against these walls the walls reverberated to the sound of the balls bouncing off them. The noise was astounding. The recreation yard was covered over. The women couldn't see the sky. Women in Limerick Prison do not engage in any paid work within the prison, neither do they participate in the school provided in the prison for the male prisoners.

#### **4.9 The Women Imprisoned**

Generally the women imprisoned over the 1900's were extremely marginal deprived and impoverished women. Structurally disadvantaged, they were imprisoned by the state when they displayed their circumstances through public drunkenness, prostitution, vagrancy, loitering or begging, or when through stealing, they attempted to improve their circumstances. Middle class women when they were imprisoned offended against not only the conventions of patriarchy but also the conventions of their class. Criminality was considered to be a lower class phenomenon. For all of Ireland's imprisoned women, political and civil prisoners and sexual deviants, the identities ascribed to them as imprisoned women are identities of deviant femininity, their experiences of imprisonment, as will be seen, being particularly designed to discipline them to ideal roles of womanhood and motherhood, (see Sim: 1991, see also Chapter Two: page 34, this work).

Over the twentieth century the crimes for which women were imprisoned, as in the nineteenth century, were offences related to their gender roles or

offences related to their structurally imposed experiences of poverty and deprivation. Throughout the 1900's, (see published annual reports of the Prison Service as well as the published accounts<sup>82</sup> of historians), great numbers of women were imprisoned for drunkenness as were one third of the 1000 committals of women imprisoned in 1930, great numbers of women were imprisoned for simple larceny; soliciting, assault and malicious injury to property being the next most notable offences, no more than three or four women were in prison in any year since the foundation of the State, (1928), to the present day for murder or manslaughter. Vagrancy and begging accounted for substantial numbers of imprisoned women until the 1970s and from the 1990's begging again became a feature of the women's prison primarily through the imprisonment of women immigrants from Eastern Europe. Drug related offences, possession, production, cultivation, import or export of drugs, or sale and supply only feature in the recorded offences from 1985. The tiny numbers of women imprisoned in Ireland in the mid to late twentieth century were imprisoned in the worst conditions available in the prison system, most of them were imprisoned regularly and for short periods, all were imprisoned in the most restricted and limited circumstances for offences generally of a petty, personal or sexual nature.

The prison experiences of women imprisoned in Ireland were, and they still are, radically different from the prison experiences men. The range of prisons to which a man might be sent, (see Appendix One), was not, and is still not, available to women. There are no Training Units or Sheldon

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<sup>82</sup> David Kiely, (1999), details the crimes and prison experiences of some of the women imprisoned in Ireland over the twentieth century: Annie Walsh from Limerick, the last woman executed in Ireland, hanged, as was her nephew, in Mountjoy prison in 1923 for the murder of Annie's husband; Hannah O'Leary, reprieved from a death sentence and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1925 for her part in the murder and dismemberment of her brother Pat, she was released from Mountjoy Prison in 1942 on condition that she enter a convent which she did and she lived there until she died in 1967; Mary Agnes Daly who, found guilty of murder, was sentenced to death by hanging in 1948, subsequently commuted to life imprisonment, she served seven years in Mountjoy Prison and ten years in a convent; and Mamie Cadden, the Hume St. abortionist, who was sentenced to death in 1956 for the death of Helen O'Reilly, her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and she was moved from Mountjoy Prison to the Central Mental Hospital, then Dundrum Central Criminal Lunatic Asylum, where she died in 1959. (see also Kavanagh: 2005) Mamie Cadden had previously, in 1945, been sentenced to five years imprisonment for abortion when she had been implicated in the death of Edina Bird, a dancer at the Olympia Theatre in Dublin, (see also Prone: 1992: 11-30). Dr. Gerald O'Brien, in a lecture on the death penalty in Ireland to the Royal Irish Academy, 2004, said that the Garda reports on Annie Walshe amounted to 'little more than character assassination'. He also referred to the case of Jane O'Brien who had been sentenced to be hanged, her sentence was commuted on appeal from the then Archbishop of Dublin, Archbishop O'Byrne, who appealed for clemency because he felt that it would not be seemly to hang a woman during the Eucharistic Congress.

Abbey's (an open prison set in a stately home in Co. Wicklow) for the women although for women there was until the 1970's the option of the convent or the Magdalen Homes and Laundries. Where a range of prison industries were and are available to imprisoned men, among them bagmaking, matmaking, woodwork, cabinet making shoemaking, weaving, baking, carpentry and smithing, agriculture and horticulture, printing, tailoring, shoemaking, metal work, joinery, design and manufacture, upholstery, general engineering, metal fabrication, Braille, engraving, fabrics, leather work and industrial training: imprisoned women were offered laundry work, needlework, craft work, knitting and soft toys, (see Appendix Ten).

The class structure of Irish society in the early years of the 1900's is very evident in the collection of registers of the National Archive. Among the register is the *Mountjoy Prison General Register of Convicted Prisoners*, (16.09.1912 to 14.7.1914). This register records the details of the convict women held in the prison that year. As the Register details, the women were very small in stature, most of them around four feet tall, they were aged between 16 and 60, most of them had previous prison records, and many of them recorded no next-of-kin. Catholics for the most part, they had few occupations; some were recorded as prostitutes, some as laundresses, some as charwoman. Among their recorded offences were soliciting, this generally warranted a prison sentence of 14 days; being drunk, again 14 days; using profane language, 7 days; and engaging in threatening or riotous behaviour, 4 days; their prison sentences were generally accompanied by fines, 5 to 40 shillings. The Mountjoy Prison register of 1912-1914 records the details of Mary Kelly, 4 foot 9 in height and 60 years of age, she had previously been committed to prison 109 times; she had no next of kin, no fixed address, no trade or occupation, she had been imprisoned on this occasion for 14 days and fined 20 shillings for the offence of using profane and obscene language. In the case of Esther Cosgrove the record shows that she was 35 years old, 4 feet tall, a charwomen from Charlemont St., her next of kin was her husband, imprisoned for one month for attempting suicide, she was bailed. The register detailed the case of Connie Jones who had been

imprisoned for two months, for the offence of 'wandering' (see Appendix 11 for listed offences since 1930). The register records 20 cases on each page, and on one page in September 1912 the twenty women detailed had been imprisoned for eight different offences, eight were imprisoned for using profane language, five were imprisoned for soliciting, two were imprisoned for the offence of Indecent Act, and one was imprisoned for each of the following offences, obstruction, threatening behaviour, sheebeening, (running an illegal public house), begging, and being drunk and disorderly. All were sentenced to days, up to 14 days, in prison with fines of up to 40 shillings.

In addition to civilian prisoners women were imprisoned in Ireland throughout the 1900's for political activities. In the early decades of the twentieth century in Ireland politically active women were deeply concerned with and deeply involved in three substantial struggles, the labour struggle<sup>83</sup>, the struggle for suffrage<sup>84</sup> and the struggle for an independent Irish Republic. The women were suffragettes and republicans, trade unionists and activists. Among other things they campaigned against a reprise of the Contagious Disease Acts of the 1800's in the shape of the 1918 Regulation 40 D DORA<sup>85</sup>. Suffragette women<sup>86</sup> and Republican women were for the most part educated middle class women<sup>87</sup> with political agendas although the radical and revolutionary elements of their political agendas were generally constrained by the status of women in the Irish society of that time.

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<sup>83</sup> Cullen Owens, (1984: 36-38), details that in the early 1900's massive unemployment was a feature of Dublin life, one third of the city's population lived in over-crowded, unsanitary slums and Dublin's death rate was higher than any other city in Europe. At that time James Larkin and James Connolly organised the workers in Dublin and this organisation culminated in the 1913 lockout, where employees on strike across Dublin were for eight months locked out by employers. There was massive civil unrest and men and women joined the ICA, (Irish Citizen Army), to help protect the striking workers.

<sup>84</sup> The Representation of the People Act was passed in 1918 giving the vote to women of 30 years of age and older, and to men over the age of 21.

<sup>85</sup> Similar to the Contagious Diseases Acts, and designed to protect soldiers against venereal disease and under which a woman could be arrested on suspicion of being infected and a woman could be detained on the basis of a verbal charge made by a soldier, (see Cullen Owens: 1984: 122-123).

<sup>86</sup> Rosemary Cullen Owens, (1984, 2001), details the emergence and development of the suffragette movement in Ireland, the formation in Dublin in 1876 by Anna Haslam of the first Irish suffragette society, and the inauguration in Dublin in 1908, by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and her friends, of a radical militant suffragette movement in Ireland, the *Irish Women's Franchise League*<sup>86</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> The labour movement at that time believed that women's suffrage meant votes for 'ladies' rather than votes for women.

Republican women were imprisoned by the British in local jails, in Kilmainham Jail<sup>88</sup>, in Mountjoy Jail and in British prisons following the 1916 rising; and in local jails, in Mountjoy Prison and in Kilmainham Jail, and in the North Dublin Union, a former workhouse used as a concentration camp<sup>89</sup> by the Free State Army during the Civil War, (Cooke: 1995, McCool: 1997, and 2003, and Carey: 2000, see also McGowan: 2003<sup>90</sup>). These women are represented in literature and in their own memoirs as brave, gallant and self-sacrificing women; they were politically feminist nationalists, however the roles allowed them in the Republican movement were feminine and feminised<sup>91</sup>. Despite the women's perceptions and portrayals of themselves as brave and gallant revolutionaries, women's involvement in revolutionary politics was considered at the time to be irreconcilable with their femininity and with their familial roles, the critical identities ascribed to women in Ireland at that time. McCool records, (2001: 60), how many of the families of the women were ashamed of their experiences of imprisonment and that many of the women, on being released from prison, never again spoke of those experiences. They were women who within a patriarchal society had deviated from their feminine roles.

<sup>88</sup> Again in the worst conditions in the prison. McCool, (1997: 29-31), writes that the women were held in the older west wing, dating from the 1790's which was 'in a poor state of repair with poor sanitary conditions'.

<sup>89</sup> The memoirs archived in Kilmainham Gaol document the following escape attempt: 'The really chief bit of excitement was when the decision was taken to make a tunnel as a means to escape to the outside world. Those engaged in this enterprise were at it for some days and it was very hush-hush, we only heard vague rumours of how things were progressing. However the hopes of the workers were dashed to the ground when the plans of the tunnel were captured in a city office. They had met with some snags in the work of tunnelling and had sent out diagrams to the engineers outside for their advice'. Another memoir documents the following seduction: 'Vamped Sergeant C at Work House door and he promised to send in sweets. This promise he duly fulfilled. Oh! How we greeted those chocolates'.

<sup>90</sup> For details of the Countess Markievicz's prison experiences of solitary confinement in Kilmainham Jail following the 1916 Rising and proclamation of the Republic, her experience of a life sentence in Aylesbury Jail in England when her death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and her experience of hunger strike in the North Dublin Union in 1923 during the Civil War.

<sup>91</sup> Cullen Owens, (1984), gives some sense of Irish society at that time, the extraordinary post-famine wave of piety; the Catholic view that women's suffrage was incompatible with the Catholic ideal of the unity of domestic life; the profoundly anti-suffragette ethos of the time; and, despite the ideals of equality of the leaders of the 1916 Rising, the secondary supportive role offered from 1914 to 1916 by the Volunteers to Cumann na mBan. Following the 1916 Rising and the loss in the fighting or through imprisonment of many of the men, Cumann na mBan did take a more strategic role in Irish nationalism, but Margaret Ward outlines, (2001: 60), how 'women's participation in the 1916 Rising established an image of the women's role within the nationalist movement which closely resembled that of an ideal housekeeper...', and she says that with the beginning of the Civil War, (in 1921), the Minister for Justice referred to women of the nationalist movement as 'hysterical young women who ought to be at home playing five-fingered exercises or helping their mothers with the brasses', (Ward: 2001: 61). Ward noted that the Minister's patriarchal 'conception of the kind of sheltered lives women should be leading did not prevent him from jailing 400 of them', (see Walby, (1990: page 147, and pages 163-164), for an acknowledgement of the victories won by the first wave of feminism, (see this work Chapter Two: page 17, for Walby's consideration of contemporary patriarchy).



The class structure of women's experiences of imprisonment is evident in the class division between Republican prisoners<sup>92</sup> and criminal women, the difference between poverty and privilege, and it is highlighted throughout the diaries and memoirs of the Republican women, illustrated in the fact that, as McCooile (1997: 42), details, that the revolutionary women were moved from Mountjoy Prison to Kilmainham Jail in 1923, the jail, having stopped receiving female convicts in 1881, was re-opened for the internment of republican women moved there after protesting their detention with common convicts in Mountjoy prison. The class structure is evident in the fact that the civil women prisoners cooked and cleaned for the Republican women<sup>93</sup>, (McCooile: 1997: 43), an experience also recorded in Republican Hanna O'Connor's prison memoir. O'Connor's memoir, further highlighting the class divide, is full of references to parcels from home, presents of food and slippers, cigarettes and scarves, letters from friends and comrades, and games of rounders, amateur dramatics, concerts and recitals<sup>94</sup>. The class structure is evidenced too in Brian Behan's book about his mother, *Kathleen*, (1984)<sup>95</sup>, where Behan records the following: his mother's testimony on the phenomenon.

**'Not that these great Nationalist ladies ever forgot their place in life. Madame Markievicz, in particular, thought she was very grand; her manner was very sour. Mrs Tom Clarke told me that when the three of them (her, Madame MacBride and Madame Markievicz) were in prison, the two Madames spent all their time talking about their 'blood' the noble blood in their veins-and she was just a poor woman. Though her husband had been shot, he was only a shopkeeper, so she was no one.'**

<sup>92</sup> The highest-ranking officials in Cumann na mBan were from educated middle and upper class backgrounds and university-educated women were well represented among the ranks of imprisoned Republican women, (McCooile: 2001: 46).

<sup>93</sup> Sinead McCooile records, (1997: 42), that the Republican women were moved to Kilmainham Gaol in February 1923 'after a protest at their detention with common convicts in Mountjoy'. McCooile records, (1997: 43), that women convicts were brought from Mountjoy to Kilmainham to 'do the cooking and the general cleaning'.... that 'the Civil War prisoners were able to take a bath each morning with warm water provided by the convict (women) who worked the furnace'.

<sup>94</sup> These depictions of prison with their mixtures of comfortable references humour and heroism do not diminish the sacrifices of the women, they used hunger strike frequently and efficiently and although no woman died, many suffered permanent ill health as a result. Hanna O'Connor's memoir records Maud Gonne's (Madame McBride) departure from Kilmainham Jail on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1923. 'We have vivid recollections of the night she was released. When she was brought downstairs on a stretcher and the prisoners gathered round to give her a silent send-off. It seemed like a scene from a film with the lights burning dimly in the compound and dead silence prevailing. Truly it was a fit setting for her send off, but Madame McBride did not realise that her fellow prisoners were gathered round to pay her this tribute, as she was only half-conscious, and to some of us she seemed already dead'.

<sup>95</sup> Dramatised by Jim Sheridan as *Mother of all the Behans*.

In addition to female civil and political prisoners, women were incarcerated throughout the 1900's up to the 1970's in convent Magdalen Homes. These homes or asylums throughout the 1900's increasingly became homes for unmarried mothers where families concerned about public shame, surrendered, consigned or condemned their daughters and sisters to the care of the nuns who ran what had become the Magdalen Laundries. These experiences have been recorded in a number of films and documentaries, (see *The Magdalen Laundry*: 1992, *Dear Daughter*: 1996, *Sex in Cold Climate*: 1998, and *Sinners*: 2002), all of which illustrate women's experiences within those institutions. The women were deemed to be fallen women in need of punishment. The nuns running the institutions, subject to the doctrines of Christianity, to the strictures of their Religious Orders and to the powers of the bishops and priests in their areas, incarcerated the women and infantilised them while disciplining them for their sexualities. The women were domestic, they cooked, they served and they cleaned. They were confined; they could not leave the convents. Their heads were shorn and they were taunted, tortured, bullied and beaten into submission to the regimes.

In the radio documentary *The Magdalen Laundry*, (1992), the narrator outlined how for nearly one hundred years in Ireland, single women who became pregnant or women who just weren't wanted were banished by their families to the Mary Magdalen Home Laundry, 'banished to a legally indefensible detention which some of the women endured for the rest of their lives'. The documentary outlines the modifications introduced in Ireland into the Magdalen asylum model most notable among them the involuntary nature of the confinement. One of the contributors, Patricia Bourke Brogan, (see also Burke Brogan: 1994), a novice in the Mercy Order in the 1960's, recalls:

**'I remember a long dark brown corridor, first of all a door was unlocked and I was led along the corridor and then another door was unlocked and each time a door was locked after me.... So I was imprisoned as well. It was a Sunday afternoon and the women were crowded into a room with a smell of stale perfume and cigarette smoke.....it was the look in their eyes really, this sort of trapped look. Their families had signed them in...so first of all they were betrayed by their lovers, their men**

**friends who didn't support them in the pregnancy, then their families, their brothers or sisters or parents who signed them in to this place, and they were there some of them for the rest of their lives.'**

**(Taken from *The Magdalen Laundry: 1992*)**

Some of the women would jump over the wall to try to escape, (see also Curtin: 2001: 85), in a laundry hamper, only to be brought back again. Patricia Thuillier, (Milotte: 1997: 140), was in the home in Castlepollard and speaking of her own experience in a Magdalen Laundry said that 'someone always made a run for it, (see also Finnegan: 2001: 216), but they were caught and dragged back. I don't know of anyone who got away but the Guards were always being called ...I suppose it was like a prison': The women lived, worked and died in complete anonymity sequestered within the Magdalen Laundry<sup>96</sup>. This sequestering in Ireland of single pregnant women<sup>97</sup> continued until the 1970's<sup>98</sup>.

Activist and writer Sue Richardson who was imprisoned in Mountjoy Prison from October 1979 to April 1981 provided evidence of women's experiences of Mountjoy Prison of that time. The authorities had identified Sue as a political prisoner<sup>99</sup>, a label she resisted. She successfully sued the State over

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<sup>96</sup> Milotte, (1997), details the role of the Magdalen Laundries, and other refuges for unmarried mothers, in mid to late twentieth century Ireland in the secret export of Irish babies for adoption, an activity Milotte, (1997:25), credits to De Valera, born in America himself to an unmarried mother, as Taoiseach first and then as Minister for External Affairs with responsibility for issuing the first 'adoption passports'<sup>96</sup>. Milotte states that between the 1920's and the 1970's over 100,000 babies were born in Ireland to unmarried parents and he attributes the stigma that such an event occasioned to the hypocrisy of the times. 'There was scarcely a family in the 1940s, 50s or 60s in Ireland that didn't have a relative, friend or acquaintance who either got pregnant out of wedlock or fathered an 'illegitimate' child. Yet it was a taboo subject, never discussed in polite company and if mentioned at all then only in hushed tones of holy indignation. An appalling stigma was attached to 'illegitimacy', having a child out of wedlock was regarded as an unspeakably scandalous act.' (Milotte: 1997:18)

<sup>97</sup> Milotte further details the maternity hospitals, mother and baby homes, orphanages and industrial schools run by religious, generally nuns, in Ireland all of which aimed for self-sufficiency through their farms, their laundries, their needlework or their bakeries, all staffed as Milotte says, 'with fallen women'. The women had their babies in total secrecy, in many cases their parents never knew anything about the pregnancy, the birth or the baby, the nuns prided themselves on the stealth and concealment they could guarantee as any shadow of suspicion or scandal could jeopardise the girls entire future, (Milotte: 1997: 156). This secrecy (Milotte states: 1997: 156), protected the fathers of the babies and prevented the women from demanding any rights they might have considered they had in relation to the babies. The women shrouded in this secrecy and deception went back to their lives and carried on after the birth of their babies as if nothing had happened.

<sup>98</sup> Finnegan, (2001: 46-128), notes that as late as 1970 *The Reformatory and Industrial Schools Report* observed that 70 girls, between 13 and 19 years of age, were being detained by the courts in convent Magdalen homes. The report highlighted the doubtful legal validity of the detentions and it noted that girls with recurring sexual offences were unwelcome in reformatory schools and were typically sent to Magdalens, (see also Rafferty and O'Sullivan: 1999).

<sup>99</sup> In the late decades of the twentieth century the very small number of Republican women imprisoned in the Republic of Ireland were among some of the more famous women held in Limerick Prison in recent years. A prison officer in Limerick Prison spoke to me of some of those women: Josephine Hayden: 'sentenced to four and a half years, served full time'; Rose Dugdale: 'served more than two years, only dealt with you when she had to'; Marion Coyle: 'served at least three years, background in the IRA, her boyfriend and Uncle were shot by the Brits'; Marie Murray: 'sentenced to death for her part in the murder of off-duty Garda Reynolds, commuted to life in prison, she left Limerick Prison after 17 years, did loads of degrees here and ran a marathon in the yard at Mountjoy Prison'. The officer said that all these women did hard time in dire circumstances, very restricted visits, no TVs, no phone calls, no kettles.

the condition of her imprisonment, which was found to be unhygienic and dangerous to health and therefore unlawful and illegal, and she was released<sup>100</sup>. She spoke to me of the monochrome environment that was Mountjoy Female Prison at that time,<sup>101</sup> no colour<sup>102</sup> at all and very little air. She talked of the women with whom she had been imprisoned drawing attention as she did to the class structure and the gendered and poverty generated nature of female criminality in Ireland:

**‘The women were there for very little, shop lifting, prostitution, snatching purses, very minor crimes most of them. I remember one woman who was there for six months for stealing an apple pie from a chipper; she got six months because of her previous. There were a couple of middle class women, one was there for fraud, she served her sentence. Most of the women came from the north inner city (of Dublin) from really poor families, and when they told you of their childhoods.... There were a few Travellers and occasionally women from the country but very few of them. They were usually in for theft of some sort, but then most of us were in for theft of some description’.**

She said that there were no dangerous women in the prison, they were all poor women who had engaged in criminal activity because they had no other way, very few of them had any skills. The subjugated subjectivities of imprisoned women are evident in the controlled environment of the prison, in the nature of the women’s protests within the institution. Sue said the women protested verbally, she spoke of the women’s quick Dublin wit; otherwise she said that there was very little protest. She said that the environment was so controlled an organised protest would have been out of the question. Any protest any individual engaged in within the prison resulted in that person being punished, locked up or: ‘put in the black hole, a cell with no ventilation, no books’. She said that sometimes women would set fire to their cells or cut their wrists, some of the women had scars on their arms from their wrists to their elbows. Sue believes the cutting to be a form of resistance<sup>103</sup>, as well as a cry for help: ‘like saying I just can’t take this any more but instead of saying this women would cut themselves’.

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<sup>100</sup> The State (Richardson) v. Governor of Mountjoy Prison, High Court, 28 March 1980, (Byrne et al: 1981: pages 3 and 9)

<sup>101</sup> The women at this time were in the basement of the B-wing of St. Patrick’s Institution, which could accommodate 20 women.

<sup>102</sup> Lundström-Roche, (1985), writing at that time, detailed that ‘prison beige’ was the dominant colour of the whole female prison.

<sup>103</sup> See Carlen, Sim, Ussher, Frignon and Worral: Chapter Two: page 34, for a consideration of depressed, bizarre behaviour, internalised anger and self mutilation as women’s attempts to remain independent of and to resist penal

The different identities indeed the clash of identities between the women imprisoned and the women imprisoning them was evident in Sue's testimony: she said that some of the officers had very low opinions of the women prisoners and treated them accordingly. Most of the officers were countrywomen from country villages and most of the prisoners were women from Dublin's north inner city. Culturally, she said, they were miles apart: 'the women prisoners were not within their ken'. The subservient status of the imprisoned women was reinforced constantly in the conventional modes of address within the prison where, according to Sue, some of the prison officers, 'when they wanted to get your attention, screeched at you and called you by your number, all of them called you by your surname, while you always had to address them as 'Miss'. This titled mode of address, from prisoners to prison officers, persists to this day within the women's prisons. Sue thought that the most striking thing about prison was the unbelievably petty rules. She believes that crime at that time, (1979-1980), was a form of rebellion for women, a rebellion against the roles they were given. She said that the criminal women of that time tended to be the less passive women in society, women who in desperate situations would not go to the Church or to a charitable organisation like the St Vincent de Paul for help but would do something to help themselves. She believes that the rules, regulations and practices of the prison were designed to encourage such women into passivity.

#### **4.10 Female Imprisonment in the 1900's**

The nature of female imprisonment in Ireland is evident in the protective, moral and religious character, (see Klein: 1977, Heidensohn: 1968, Carlen: 1985 and Smart: 1976, see also Chapter Two: page 24, this work, for a critique of the moralistic underpinnings of representations of the deviancies and delinquencies of criminal women of earlier criminological works), of much of that imprisonment; it is evident in the petty, personal or sexual

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regimes, and the propensity of prison managers to pathologise negative responses to their surveillant control regimes.

nature of much of that imprisonment; and finally and ultimately it is evident in the gendered nature of those experiences of imprisonment. The protective moral and religious nature of those experiences of imprisonment is evident from the 1800's to the present day and manifest in varied and ambivalent ways: evident for example in the policy of moving women from prison custody to the custody of convents which persisted in Ireland into the late 20th century; evident where male prisoners at the end of their prison sentences were released on license into the community, women prisoners were 'released' into the custody of a convent; evident historically in women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland in Lock Hospitals, the imprisonment of prostitutes and women deemed to be prostitutes, and in the incarceration of women engaging in or women suspected or accused of sexual misconduct in convent Magdalen homes.

The petty, personal or sexual nature of the offences of most women imprisoned in Ireland is evident in the extraordinary numbers of women imprisoned in Ireland for public order offences, it is evident in the offences of women incarcerated in Ireland in Lock Hospitals and in Magdalen Asylums; it is evidenced in the findings of the MacBride Report on the Irish Penal System, (1982: 50-51), which found that in 1979, with few exceptions, women were imprisoned for trifling offences such as drunkenness, larceny, soliciting and begging; and it is evidenced in my research into prison archives and records of the last two centuries. Both Department of Justice records, (Annual Prison Reports: relevant years), and my own research into prison archives and records, establish that from the 1930s to date most of the women imprisoned in Ireland were imprisoned for drunkenness and for loitering, for begging and vagrancy and from time to time and to greater or lesser extents for soliciting; very small numbers of women were imprisoned in Ireland throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century right up to the present day for serious offences such as manslaughter and murder.

Women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland were and are patriarchal. This is evident right through the history of those experiences: it is evident in imprisoned women's experiences of transportation, Dobash et al, (1986: 33),

documented how conditions for female convicts sentenced to transportation were much worse than those for men, that the British government transported convict women to the colonies as sexual commodities. It is evident in Ireland's model prison system, the Crofton points system, within which imprisoned men moved to progressively less secure prisons while imprisoned women were forced to remain in the same prison for their entire prison sentence, it is evident in the release-on-license experience of men contrasted with the release into the custody of a convent experience of women; it is evident in Ireland's peculiarly female carceral archipelago which including prisons encompassed Lock Hospitals and Magdalen asylums; it is evident in the conditions in which women in prison in Ireland were kept, generally the worst conditions available within the prison system. It was and is evident in the work opportunities available within prison for women, while imprisoned men engaged and engage in a range of agricultural, horticultural, technical, craft and manufacturing pursuits, those imprisoned afforded work opportunities were and still are offered cleaning, catering, laundry work and sewing. It is evident in the *architecture parlante*, (Garland: 1990: 259), of the contemporary female penal institutions: in the male ordered, male structured and male oriented Limerick Prison and Central Mental Hospital where women are held, in each of these institutions, on one small wing; and it is evident in the 'family and home design' of the new women's prison at Mountjoy Prison, the Dochas Centre. The nature of the institutions within which women are currently imprisoned in Ireland evidence contemporary public and political discourses of identity and women in prison in Ireland: women in prison in Ireland are at present held in marginal sections of male institutions or they are held in the only female institution, the new women's prison which is structured around an ideology of family and home

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter with its exploration of the subjectivities historically ascribed to women in prison in Ireland goes some way to accomplishing the aim of this thesis, to explore historically, socially and spatially, women's experiences of

imprisonment in Ireland. The chapter details the women's experiences of imprisonment historically establishing the subjectivities ascribed to the women, subjectivities of poverty, of petty infantilised criminalities, criminalities related to lack of opportunity, related to poverty, to patriarchal conceptions of femininity and to pathologised perceptions of female sexuality, all of which are manifestations of the status of women within Irish society, manifestations of the lack of opportunity for women in that society and manifestations of the ideal of the female role in that society, the mother at the centre of the family and home.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Contemporary Discourses**

In this chapter I explore the manner in which within the contemporary discourses of the criminal justice system, the print media, the Irish Prison Service, and the structures of the Irish female prison, the imprisoned women are subject positioned. These discourses represent the various gazes ascribing identities to the women. And they are explored in this chapter. The data analysed is from observations within the women's prisons, from observations of senior management meetings within the Dochas Centre, from interviews conducted with 30 experts, (see Appendices Three and Four for a list of interviewees and for a copy of the interview schedule), and from my analysis of press coverage of women in prison and the women's prisons, (see Appendix Thirteen for details of sample articles).

#### **5.1 Expert Gazes**

Since Panopticon the gaze has been central to prisoners' experiences of imprisonment. The technology of the gaze with the modern prison, as detailed in Chapter Two, (see Page 41), has developed from a Benthamite panopticism to a Foucauldian panopticism. Within Foucauldian panopticism, as discussed in Chapter Two of this work (see page 41), a subtle calculus of power acts on human subjects to produce docile bodies and this power is said to be present in the various institutions designed to control. It is wielded with these institutions by experts and professionals, Foucault's permanent petty tribunals (1977, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 42). Dominant individuals hegemonically articulate the norms of society and they communicate them. These norms are then enforced. This, as Foucault detailed (1974a), is the order of things. The norm and indeed the abnormal is constantly articulated and communicated within society. For those unable or incapable of attaining or maintaining the norm support is provided. This support, as we saw in Chapter Four, frequently takes the form of shelter. For those wilfully, or even simply obviously, falling short of the norm stigmatising labels such as deviant and criminal are rapidly affixed forcefully encouraging conformity. When all else fails, corrective

programmes are available, rehabilitation and cures in clinics and hospitals, and punishment and rehabilitation in prisons.

The power to order things and to produce docile bodies is deeply embedded in society. It is embedded in notions of what is right and what is proper in terms of human behaviour (see Elias: 2000, see also Chapter Two: page 26, this work), in terms of how we live and what it is that we live by. In Ireland the order of things is patriarchal (Chapter Two: page 24). The patriarchal order has been shaped in large part by the religious, predominantly Catholic, habitus of our society. This habitus was deeply rooted and, for a long time, unchallenged. The changes in our society when they did come came from the many challenges presented at the end of the twentieth century to this order of things. Foremost among these challenges were three major cultural shifts. The first was Ireland's membership of the European Union through which the country became less isolated and increasingly globally engaged, socially, politically and economically. The second was a fundamental undermining of Catholic authority and influence which was at this time continuously challenged. Finally and significantly there was the second wave of the feminist movement and the changes the movement accomplished. In 1971 The Irish Women's Liberation Movement six-point manifesto (*Chains or Change*) was published. In 1972 *The Report of the Commission on the Status of Women* was published highlighting a gendered definition of women's citizenship which it described as a harmful cultural stereotype. Ireland joined the EEC in 1973. The marriage bar, introduced in 1932 excluding married women from public service employment (see Chapter Four: page 119: footnote 65), was removed in 1973. In 1974 legislation on equal pay was introduced and followed in 1977 by legislation on employment equality. The automatic right to women of jury service, denied in the 1927 Juries Act, was restored in 1976 and in 1990, Mary Robinson, a leader in the women's movement, was elected President of Ireland (see Scannell: 1988, Beaumont: 1999).

There is no doubt that the habitus of Irish society was changing. Despite the evident changes however, the patriarchal habitus did continue to order things, and it continued to be reflected in the order of things. Although a

woman had been elected President of Ireland, she was extraordinary. This was illustrated in an award-winning photograph published in the Irish Times and reprinted in John Horgan's biography of Mary Robinson (Horgan: 1997: 146). The photograph, titled '*A Woman in a Man's World*' depicts President Robinson inspecting a military guard of honour. On the same page of the biography there is a photograph of President Robinson concluding her Presidential inaugural speech. There are 26 people depicted in the photograph, apart from the President; all but two of them are men. The two women depicted are barely evident. Very evident among the men clearly depicted are the cultural trappings of power, wigs of the legal profession, upper class morning coats, militaristic uniforms, and the familiar (male) iconic faces of Irish politics. In the photograph, Mary Robinson is very obviously a woman in a man's world.

The changes in Irish society and the challenges to patriarchy prompted the development of an apparently more egalitarian society and a rapidly developing economy. Despite the changes, there are yet few women in powerful positions in Irish society (see Chapter Two: page 25: footnote 14). The low level of participation by women in senior positions in Irish society is said to be a manifestation of a socialisation process which transmits traditional assumptions about women's roles, the prioritisation of a home and family-based role for women. As McKinnion said, (1994, see also Chapter Two: page 23, this work), power is institutionalised in a masculine and indeed masculinist form. The issues in terms of the effect of these traditionalist assumptions regarding appropriate roles for women are as follows: the continued relegation of women to the private sphere; adherence to the prioritisation of caring familial roles for women; and the perpetuation of gender inequality in terms of status, power and employment.

In Ireland the State is the people. The mandate to govern in Ireland is given to the government by the people within a fair and democratic system. The people through democratic elections rule, or at least they decide who rules and in large part how they rule. In this way, the government and the individuals who comprise government are subject to the people. The powerful hold their powerful positions through the will of the people. This

reliance of power on the will of the people explains the reactive nature of government and thus the reactive nature of the Irish criminal justice and penal systems. This reactive nature was demonstrated in Chapter Two of this work (page 47), where O'Donnell and O'Sullivan (2001) traced the development of criminal justice policies to the murders of Jerry McCabe and Veronica Guerin. The force of the moral panic generated by the murders was seen in turn to generate an equally forceful criminal justice response.

The reactive capacity of the State is implicated in discursive constructions of criminal deviance, and in cultural conceptions of the state's penal institutions, and the criminal justice system. Crime in Ireland is perceived as being violent, and drug and property related, (see Chapter Two: page 18). The gazes of the State were seen in Chapter Two to readily fall on such criminality, facilitating the discursive construction of class-based perceptions of criminality. In Ireland, criminals, given this construction of criminality, tend to be poorer people. Criminalised individuals, generally poorer less educated people, when imprisoned by the judiciary, generally affluent well-educated people, are, through imprisonment, stigmatised and dangerised. In this way such subjectivities are constructed and represented within power relations.

Prisoners' subjectivities are in large part discursively produced. The project of constructing prisoner subjectivities is accomplished for the most part through expert discourses. Penal gazes through expert discourses ascribe identities to and inscribe identities upon imprisoned women. In general for prisoners the powerful shaping discourses are multiple and frequently distant, and they often develop and perpetuate stereotypical and ideologically informed perceptions of prisoners based on myths, half-truths and generalisations. As detailed in the Literature Review, Goffman, drawing on Meade's work, wrote of managing spoiled identities, he wrote of identity as a performance, a performance of belonging. Goffman wrote of the many different identities an individual assumes in the course of a lifetime in order to be what s/he is expected to be (1959, see Chapter Two: page 20). I outlined how, for Butler, identity is always performatively constituted. Butler wrote of identity (1990, 1993, see also this work, Chapter Two: page

21), being developed through performance, identity as imitation, fabrication, and manipulation. Butler suggests that this acting, this performance is a manifestation of power. Using the theories of both Goffman and Butler, I explored the manner in which the subjectivities of imprisoned women are discursively constructed, and the manner in which the discursive or narrated subject becomes the performed subject.

## **5.2 The Press**

Many prisoners, in addition to being subject to the political gaze to which all prisoners are subject, are also subject to an intense and pervasive media gaze (see Chapter Two: page 42). Media representations of criminal women and women in prison were seen in this work (see Chapter Two: pages 42-48), to be particularly problematic. Most problematic were the ideological representations of some such women, the stereotypical representations of some, and the mythical characterisation or narrativisation of some. In the following pages I will consider the discursive production in the press in Ireland of imprisoned women.

The print media in Ireland has a primary role in shaping the social construct that is woman in Ireland, in shaping the constructs feminine and femininity, in producing, circulating and perpetuating images and standards of normative femininity. The press has a major role, as detailed in Chapter Two (page 48), in the development of penal policy through its influence on public opinion and its influence on ministerial and government departmental opinion. These opinions, influenced as they are by the press, shape in turn the penal policy which controls and orders the prison experiences of these women. The media in Ireland, as detailed by McCullagh (1995, 1996), O'Connell (1999), and O'Donnell and O'Sullivan (2001), (see also Chapter Two, this work), can stir the public mood, and indeed often generates it. The various techniques employed by the media shape public perceptions of individuals, groups and institutions in society. Among the techniques used by the media, as detailed by Morrissey (2003: see also Chapter Two: page 44, this work), are the narratives that are told; the stock stories used, the story formats; the myths and legends evoked; the

discursive acceptance or rejection of protagonists; the construction of subject positions; and the promulgation of normative roles. The following pages contain an analysis of the subject positioning of imprisoned women in the discourses of the press.

In my analysis, as detailed in Chapter Three (page 81), I examined in total 672 newspapers. The broadsheets were the *Irish Times*, the *Sunday Tribune*, the *Sunday Independent*, and the *Sunday Business Post*. Together these newspapers published nineteen articles, eleven photographs and one cartoon. Over the entire period of the study, a time when 1,000 women were committed to prison in Ireland, the broadsheets wrote about eight women (see Appendix 14 for quantitative data). The eight women were women who had been convicted of extreme offences. Four tabloid newspapers were included in the study, one daily and three Sunday newspapers. The daily newspaper, the *Evening Herald*, had more articles about women in prison than any other newspaper, 21 articles ranging in length from 16 words to 800 words. This newspaper published 22 photographs. In all of this reporting, 12 women featured (see Appendix 15 for a synopsis of numbers of articles and images). The *Sunday World* had proportionately more articles than any newspaper and it carried by any measure the most photographs, 49 in all, many of them very large and in colour, many of them front page. Catherine Nevin was the most prominent female prisoner. Seven of the articles published in the *Sunday World* were about Catherine Nevin and there were several photographs of her, most were very large and in colour. Among the articles was one entitled '*Catherine Nevin's fellow husband murderer, Traveller Bridie Doran*'. Among the other women reported upon were Nora Wall, a Catholic nun jailed for life on being convicted of the rape of a child; a conviction quashed four days into the life sentence; Carol Anne Dunne a patient in the Central Mental Hospital, referred to in the paper as '*the Devil Killer*'; Melody McGovern, '*the Joy Escapee*' whose appearance in the paper gave the paper an opportunity to link her with her sister Sonia who was narrativised in the paper as '*a busty TV lap dancer*'; and Margaret Connors, narrativised as '*the dog-fight bookie Mum*'.

The press selected, from the hundreds of stories of women imprisoned, twenty-two stories to report, eight in the broadsheets and fourteen in the tabloids. I found as O'Connell found (1999, see also this work, Chapter Two; page 47), that the stories selected were generally the most extreme stories. The discourse which emerged from the stories told was one of danger (see Chapter Two: page 19). Within the moral structure of the discourse, imprisoned women were subject positioned as dangerous women, posing a threat or a risk to society. This resonates with Beck's work on 'Risk Society (1992), and with the work of Lianos and Douglas (Chapter Two: page 19), who all highlighted the discourse of risk in contemporary society. Lianos and Douglas also write of the capacity of the prison to 'dangerise' prisoners. This resonates with my own theory of a perceptual exaggeration in society of the pathology of the incarcerated (Chapter Two: page 19). It also resonates with Foucault's statement (Chapter Two: page 17: footnote: 5), that society signals 'wild beast' identities of prisoners to prison guards who in turn signal these identities to prisoners; and then when prisoners have learned these wild beast identities well behind bars, prison guards send them back to society. This communication process between society, the institution that is the prison and prisoners is a signaling triangle; at the core of the triangle is the media.

Cohen and Young (1973, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 43), outlined three socially constructed discourses of crime official, media, and public discourses. They said that public discourses of crime are massively dependent on media and official discourses (see also McCullagh 1995, see also Chapter Two: page 47, this work). Morrissey on her work on official discourses (2003, see also Chapter Two: page 44, this work) detailed a symbiotic relationship between the media and mainstream legal institutions, evident she said in the generally faithful reporting of the criminal narratives of criminalised individuals of the criminal courts. The media is dependent on markets and so produces discourses and narratives consonant for and in its markets. According to Cohen and Young (1973, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 43), the media reflects an image of society as it has already been 'pre-constituted by the powerful', and it is in this way that the

media is of major ideological significance for the maintenance of the status quo in society.

Despite very low levels of female criminality, and despite the very petty nature generally of female criminality, imprisoned women are subject positioned as substantial dangerous criminals within media discourse. By way of generating a comparison between male and female offending I conducted an analysis of court reporting of criminal cases, published on page four of the Irish Times, over one month (March 2001). Over that month, the Times reported on the cases of 98 men appearing in court on criminal charges. The men were charged with murder (eighteen men). They were charged with attempted murder, attempted murder and rape, with manslaughter, assault, and rape, with sex abuse, sexual assault, with human trafficking, with armed raids, and armed robbery, with smuggling, with dangerous driving causing death. There were drugs charges, charges of false accounting, terrorist related charges, and child pornography charges. Two men were having their assets frozen by the Criminal Assets Bureau, one man was charged with defamation for naming a female business associate in a sex advertisement he had created, and John Gilligan was in court that month charged with, among drugs and fire arms charges, the murder of journalist Veronica Guerin. In that month, the Times reported on five women appearing in court on criminal charges: two were charged with drug trafficking, one of these women was from South Africa, one was charged with forgery, one was fined for running brothels, and one woman was given 14 days to close a crèche she was running which was infringing child care regulations<sup>1</sup>. In addition to this, the Director General of the Prison Service said that at the time of interview, 2001, there were 390 men in prison in Ireland, convicted or accused of sex offences, one in seven of the male offenders in custody. These men he said were from the whole spectrum of Irish society, 61% of them were charged with or convicted of child abuse.

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<sup>1</sup> Also striking, in terms of a public discourse of female criminality, are the crime biographies published in Ireland over the last two decades. The titles of the books on male criminals and criminality '*Gangland*', (Williams: 1998), '*The General*', (Williams: 1998), '*King Scum*', (Reynolds: 1998), and '*Evil Empire*', (Williams: 2001), give a sense of the power and force of Ireland's prominent male criminals. The titles of the accounts of Ireland's female criminality and prominent female criminals highlight the personal and/or sexual nature of much of female criminality in Ireland. Among the books are '*Lynn: a story of prostitution*', (Madden and Levine: 1987), '*Ladies of the Kasbah: the story of Ireland's most infamous brothel and the women who worked there*', (Mullins: 1995), '*Sex in the City: The Prostitution Racket in Ireland*', (Reynolds: 2003), and among the three books published to date on Catherine Nevin, '*The Black Widow: The Catherine Nevin Story*', (O'Connor: 2000).



He concluded that neither that social spectrum nor that type of offence was reflected in the female prison population.

In my analysis of the press, I found the discourse of danger to be pervasive and communicated throughout. It is useful to remember that O'Connell (1999, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 47) found that, due to the nature of media crime coverage in Ireland, the Irish public believed itself to be experiencing, despite relatively low crime rates, a law and order crisis. Within the discourse of danger I found that there were three main narratives, narratives of badness, madness, and desperation. Primarily the narratives were of killer women, evil and cruel women, killer mums. There were some narratives of psychiatric, suicidal and anorexic women. To a lesser extent there were narratives of women who were tragic and lonely, women who were simple minded and backward. Narratives of Catherine Nevin featured most prominently. She was narrativised as 'Catherine Nevin', as 'Nevin', as 'Killer Catherine Nevin', as 'Killer Nevin', as 'Evil Nevin', as 'Murderess Nevin', and as the 'Black Widow'. Catherine Nevin became notorious through the media coverage of her crime, her trial, and her imprisonment. She was frequently linked in the narratives to other imprisoned women who were also narrativised in the press as notorious. In one of the main narratives Catherine Nevin was the 'Black Widow' who was engaged in violent conflict with 'Drugs queen' Regina Felloni. Regina Felloni was the convicted drug addicted daughter of convicted drug lord Tony Felloni (1998, see also Chapter Three: page 82, this work). In another narrative Catherine Nevin was reported to have been 'devastated since the release of her jail bodyguard – a traveller husband killer who became her best friend' (Sunday World: February 18: 2001: see Appendix 13). As the 'Black Widow' she was again reported to be 'devastated' when 'her only prison pals'...'two cocaine smuggling Brazilian drug mules'...'were to be deported', (Ireland on Sunday: 2<sup>nd</sup> September: 2001).

Throughout Catherine Nevin was narrativised as notorious. The other women, the two Brazilian women, Regina Felloni, and the Traveller, Bridie Doran, who were all convicted of serious offences, featured in these press articles only in relation to Catherine Nevin. Linking the women with

Catherine Nevin made the stories more extreme, more substantial, and more fraught with danger. Linking the stories had the effect of intensifying the danger. The journalists and the story editors clearly believed that the linking of the stories made the stories more interesting to readers. Ultimately the linking of the stories made the newspapers in which the stories appeared more marketable. One year after her conviction almost half of all of the published articles in my sample were articles about Catherine Nevin and half of all of the published photographs were photographs of her. Catherine Nevin was middle class middle-aged businesswoman who, in 1999, was convicted of conspiracy to murder her husband and subsequently sentenced to prison under three concurrent life sentences. She has in recent years provided Irish society with a moral panic and a public spectacle of Irish female criminality. Catherine Nevin in her criminal persona contravened the norms of Irish society in terms of both her gender and her class roles and the extraordinary interest in her and the moral panic generated by her further evidences, I suggest, the class structure of Irish female criminality, the perception in Irish society that criminality is a lower class phenomenon; and the predominantly petty nature of female criminality in Ireland, to which the Catherine Nevin case is an exception.

Throughout the sample articles, the sexual narrative was very limited. There were in total only four stories of an explicitly sexual nature. The most substantial of these stories related to the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions not to prosecute a senior care officer of the Central Mental Hospital who had been accused by nine female patients of sexual assault. In that article the women were represented as vulnerable. The article suggested that this vulnerability was guarded by the state however through the reporting of the decision not to prosecute. This seemed to imply that that situation had been taken care of, that there was no further cause for concern. The benevolent state had dealt with the situation. The State, having found the weakness in the system, had removed it and could now be counted upon to resume the proper care of these women<sup>2</sup>. Another sexual narrative was created by the Sunday World (1<sup>st</sup> April: 2001), around the story of Melody

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<sup>2</sup> On Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> 2003 the Irish Times carried a short article detailing the dismissal of a member of staff in the CMH following an investigation into an allegation of sexual abuse of a female patient there.

McGovern who had escaped from the Dochas Centre by walking out of the prison with a group of visitors. The newspaper used Melody's escape story as an opportunity to discuss, using sexual imagery, Melody's sister's lap-dancing career. The third article was in the Evening Herald (13<sup>th</sup> of June: 2001), a short article about a 38-year-old woman charged with sexually assaulting an eight-year-old girl. There was also the article about Nora Wall (see page 146).

There was in the reporting a discourse of desperation. This was created through the narratives of lonely women, suicidal women, tragic women, and backward women. The Evening Herald (31<sup>st</sup>: May: 2001), carried a substantial story about Deirdre Rose, a twenty-year-old pregnant wife and mother, imprisoned for life for murder, and subsequently released after serving eighteen months in prison. According to the article's headline 'pregnant killer Deirdre' who was said to be 'suicidal, anorexic and backward' had spent a 'lonely 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in Mountjoy'. The Evening Herald (14th June: 2001) reported on the suicide in prison of Lynda Byrne (see Appendix 13, see also Appendix 2: page 9). The same paper (21<sup>st</sup>: July: 2001), reported the story of a teenage girl who 'had been jailed for her own protection after threatening suicide'. This girl was back in court again in August (reported in the Sunday Tribune: 19<sup>th</sup> August: 2001), when she was once more sent to Mountjoy Prison 'as a last resort'. There was also in the reporting some evidence of a narrative of motherhood. As the reporting was generally of the more extreme cases of imprisoned women, the mothers who featured in the articles were generally represented as extremely deviant. Among the mothers were the '*dog-fight bookie Mum*', and the '*killer mum*', the '*pregnant killer*', and the '*evil mum-to-be*', the latter three appellations all referring to Deirdre Rose.

Throughout there was little positive reporting and the reporting was at times less than factual, beyond the facts of the crimes with which the women were charged or convicted. As detailed in Chapter Two (page 40), the media, selecting from the vast array of information available the information they present, provide us with guiding myths which shape our sense of our world. Cohen and Young (1973, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 40), detail

that in terms of accuracy in reportage, there is much evidence that the media 'consistently get things wrong' and report less than factual accounts of issues or events. I found this to be the case my analysis. Stories of friendships in the prison were fabricated and/or exaggerated, and stories of parties and revelries within the prison were personalised and intrusive, and frequently inaccurate or fabricated. At the time of my media analysis of the coverage in the press of the women's prisons and the women in our women's prisons, I was immersed in my primary data collection and spending all my time in the women's prisons. I was at that time very familiar with the women who featured in the press and very familiar with the situations and incidences reported in the press. The reporting was almost invariably exaggerated, inaccurate or untrue. The female prison was characterised in the press as being focused on family values. It was represented as a well-ordered holiday camp with occasional hill-walking trips in the Wicklow Mountains, or as a private school with graduation day barbeques where steaks, giant burgers, ribs and side salads were served. The women were represented as entirely and emphatically heterosexual. They were said in one article to go to mass in 'one of several top fashion outfits' hoping for a long chat with the prison chaplain, 'the only chance of male contact'. Currently in the Dochas Centre there are two prison chaplains, one Catholic and one Church of Ireland, both are women. In addition to this, very many men, tradesmen, prison officers, male prisoners, teachers, trainers, counselors, probation officers, and medical personnel, work with and around the women every day. The friendships among the women, those reported generally fabrications either on the part of the journalists or the journalist's informers, were depicted as shallow, opportunistic relationships entered into for protection or through greed or avarice.

The prison itself was positioned within a discourse of danger. It was depicted as dangerous frightening place. a place governed by secretive underworld codes, a place where a woman would need a bodyguard, where the only real safety lay in isolation. In the prison the women were represented as having to be manipulative conniving and ingratiating to survive. Frequent staff shortages and a consequent lack of supervision were reported to have facilitated the development of a drug culture which now

prevailed unchecked. The representation was one of a prison where the fundamental issue for imprisoned women was learning how to survive. Still the women were represented as being 'admitted' to the prison, as one is admitted to hospital, while the State was represented as institution observing a constitutional obligation to protect, often protecting people from themselves.

The public representation in the press in Ireland of women in prison in Ireland is the main public representation in Ireland of these women and I found it in my analysis to be generally partial, hostile and exaggerated. The implication of this in terms of public perceptions in Ireland of imprisoned women is profoundly troublesome particularly in light of the general nature of female criminality in Ireland, established as being predominantly of a petty, personal or sexual nature. The selection by the press of twenty women to narrativise, from a potential population of 1,000 women, produced in the press a skewed perspective on imprisoned women. In the limited range of the representation, the narratives were stock stories, the characters mythical characters. Morrissey (2003, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 44), outlined the process by which the media constructs stock stories and subjectifies mythical characters. The characters are, she said, subjectified through the principles of story-telling; the story-telling the media engages in is limited to a number of stock tales or narratives arising from popular stories or myths. One of the most common of these is the morality play which places the forces of good on one side and the forces of evil on the other (Chapter Two: page 45). The media in mediating the event, within the imperatives of limited time and space, according to Morrissey reduce and simplify often complex stories to easily understood easily judged tales and within this process, individual subjectivities can become stereotyped, victimised even mythified.

As with Smith's (1997, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 45), finding of the 'unnatural' representation in the media of women killers, Myra Hindley, the White Devil, and Rose West, the Black Widow, and Morrissey's study (Chapter Two: 46), of, among others, the vampire lesbian killer Tracey Wigginton, we in Ireland have our own Black Widow,

Catherine Nevin, and our own Devil Killer, Carol Anne Dunne (see above). With the focus in the press on the serious violent crimes committed by very very few women the narratives presented and the discourse produced, mythologizes female criminality in Ireland. The subject positioning of imprisoned women within violent dangerous narratives has substantial implications. For the women the implications arise from the interpellation of the women as dangerous. Morrissey (2003: 54), uses this term Althusserian term (Chapter Two: page 46) which she defines as the process through which individuals are compelled to identify with the representations which their culture supplies. This means that the press, by subject positioning the women as dangerous, encourages the women, through this process of interpellation, to identify themselves with the subject positions provided. The imprisoned women recognise themselves in these interpellations and as they do, so too do those imprisoning them.

### **5.3 Prison Staff**

In this section I will examine the manner in which imprisoned women are subject positioned within the discourses of the staff and professionals working in and with the women's prisons. As will be seen McKinnon's assertion, (Chapter Two: page 23, see also this Chapter: page 144), that power is institutionalised in a masculine and indeed masculinist form is most applicable to Ireland's prisons. Responsibility for prisons in Ireland rests with the Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform. The current Minister is Michael McDowell, a former Attorney General. He delegates responsibility for the prisons to the Irish Prison Service. The Director General of the Prison Service was Sean Alyward, a career civil servant who has worked in the Department of Justice for most of if not his entire career. Sean Alyward is now Secretary of the Department. Brian Purcell currently holds the position of Director General. The Director of Education for Prisons is Kevin Warner. The Director of Education in Mountjoy Prison is Vincent Sammon. The head teacher in the Dochas Centre is Marcie Barron, in Limerick Prison, Camilla McGourty. Prison Governors were all male until 2002. Women in senior Prison Officer positions were Chief Officers, Assistant Governors and there was one Deputy Governor, Kathleen

McMahon. In 2002 Kathleen McMahon was promoted from her position as Deputy Governor of the Dochas Centre to Governor of that prison, she was the first woman in the history of the State to be appointed to that position. Kathleen's immediate supervisor, her mentor and guide, is John Lonergan, Governor of Mountjoy Prison. John Lonergan entered the Prison Service in 1968. He has been Governor of Mountjoy Prison since 1992; he was also Governor of that prison between 1984 and 1988, the intervening years he spent as Governor of Port Laois Prison. Throughout all of the expert interviews conducted for this research John Lonergan, and his vision for women in prison, was credited with the realisation of the Dochas Centre, with the building itself, with the ethos of the prison, and with the innovations in the regime there. John Lonergan has been Ireland's pioneer in terms of women's imprisonment in Ireland in the late 1900's. His personal and professional philosophy, in line with the philosophies of the reformers of the nineteenth century, (see Chapter Four), is Christian.

Prison is a specialised space, a punitive space, designed for custody and control. As detailed in Chapter Two (page 34), prisons attempt the construction of separate worlds with separate space and separate use of space; the control that is the control in prison space, expressed in confinement and routine, has been considered by Sim (1991), Foucault (1977), and Garland and Young (1983). Irigaray's notion of space as a container, an envelope of identity (1993, see also this work, Chapter Two: page: 39) is useful in relation to prisons and the capacity of prisons to ascribe identities and it is particularly useful to think of prison as an envelope of identity when considering the experiences of individuals criminalised by the criminal justice system and the judiciary; individuals who are, through the experience of imprisonment, stigmatised and dangerised (Chapter Two: page 19).

The following paragraph gives some sense of women's experiences of imprisonment in Ireland, and of the manner in which, through these experiences, the women's identities are constructed, their subjectivities shaped. Women are imprisoned in prison in Ireland in a closed world. In that world they must contend with the censoring of correspondence, letters

and phone calls, and with the monitored weekly half-hour visits with family and friends. They must contend with control and the invasive nature of that control: the surveillance, the compulsory searches, the relentless observation and the continuous monitoring. They must contend with the lack of privacy and they must contend with the 'jolly along', the head patting, the false promises ('prison promises') and the patronage. They must deal with the spatial arrangements within the prison, a prison divided or demarcated into prisoner space, staff space and visitor space. These experiences represent the routines of the women's prisons. The routinization of prison life facilitates what Butler (1993, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 21) calls the reiterative practice through which discourse produces the effect that it names. The demarcation of prisoner space is part of the prison's citation of identity, and it is related to Goffman's theory of how one's identity shapes one's access to space, (1963, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 39). Goffman held that a person's world to be divided up spatially by his personal identity as it is divided up by his social identity, that our identities dictate where we may go, where we will be permitted or accepted and where we are threaten by our identities. The citational process of naming of the women prisoners, ascribes that identity to them, and with that, particular senses of space and particular experiences of space.

In their prison space the women must deal with the constant waiting, waiting to be unlocked, waiting for lock up, waiting for a visit, waiting for a phone call, waiting for food, waiting for shop orders. They must engage with the prison regime in order to make a request, any request, a request for extra soap, for more sanitary towels or tampons, for a different deodorant, for new underwear or a new nightdress. They must deal with prison hierarchies, the titles and the obsequies, the 'yes Miss' 'no Miss' hierarchical dialogues of the prisons. Sue Richardson commented upon this means of subjugating prisoners in her testimony on her experience of imprisonment in 1979 (see Chapter Four page 139); it is still a part of prison life where it persists in shaping peoples senses of identity. Finally prisoners' subjectivities are shaped by the fact that prisoners must contend with the prisoner culture produced by the closed world of punishment that is the prison, with the gossip, the bullying, the threat or the fact of aggression or



violence, with the sharing of space, the negotiation of space, and with the power differentials of the different personalities among the prison population. If it is, as De Certeau suggests (1984, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 39), that the inscription of the neighbourhood inscribes itself on the subject as a mark of indelible belonging; and if it is as I suggest, adopting De Certeau, that in the construction of the separate world of the prison, the neighbourhood of the prison becomes for prisoners an outgrowth of the prisoners' rooms, the sum of all trajectories initiated from the prisoner's room; then it seems likely that the space that is prison space, and experiences of imprisonment within that space, are fundamental to the subject positioning of imprisoned women.

The professional information pyramid operating within the women's prisons involves information being fed from discipline and civilian staff working with the women to the management of the prison and from these people onto the Prison Service. This information is framed by staff generally concerned with issues of security and control, staff trained to focus on issues of security and control. This focus of the staff on security and control must be generated by the central management of the Prison Service, as it is the demands of the State that drive the information pyramid. The discourse of danger within which imprisoned women are subject positioned in the press, fits very well with this discourse of security in the Prison Service and the women's prisons. In terms of prison design and management, the women are dangerised. This dangerisation (see Lianos and Douglas: 2000, see also Chapter Two: page 19, this work), of the women is evidenced by the emphasis on security and control. Lianos and Douglas (2000: 119), suggest that, in the context of a dangerised world, deviance is an instrument for the perpetuation of social division. It seems to have this effect in Ireland, where many authors, among them O'Mahony (2000), O'Donnell and O'Sullivan (2001), Bacik et al (1998), O'Donnell (1998), and McCullagh (2002b), (see also Chapter Two, this work), have found that experiences of imprisonment in Ireland are largely confined to poorer, socially and economically disadvantaged, sectors of Irish society.

The prison staff interviewed for the research generally constructed their roles with the imprisoned women in terms of security and control; their role with the women is a disciplining role. They encourage, inveigle and ultimately coerce the women into engaging with the structures they provide for them in order to produce and maintain the supportive, and/or controlled environments for which the prisons were designed. Many authors detail the control exercised over women in prison (see Chapter Two). For Jose-Kampner this control is manifest in the architecture, in the regime, in the rules and regulations, in the discipline, in the linguistics of the prison; for Sparks and Bottoms it is manifest in the signs and symbols of the prison, in its rituals, in its education and healthcare, in its organised physical coercion.

Within all the prisons the regime of Prison Officers is quasi-militaristic; prison officer culture is male, in some prisons bordering on machismo. Prison Officers are trained at Beladd, the Prison Officers Training Unit at Port Laois; they receive nine weeks training in total. Representatives of management of the Prison Officers' Association, (the POA), described in interview the militaristic nature of that training; much of the focus of the training is on Prison Officers' uniforms, on the maintenance and upkeep of the uniform and on appropriate standards of presentation for the uniform and for the uniformed officer, and there is an emphasis on physical fitness. All prisoners are guarded and managed by staff who have undergone this militaristic training and the prisoners are subject positioned as prisoners within militaristic discourses throughout that training. The terms of employment for civilian staff working in prisons demand that they too undergo Prison Officer training at Beladd before they take up posts within Irish prisons. For example all of the nurses working in the Dochas Centre, all qualified nurses, all of them female, were obliged to undertake this training, training which might be seen as a means of co-opting civilian staff into the culture of the prisons. As Morris said, (1989, see also Chapter Two: page 23, this work), prison is a man's world, in and out of the system. Civilian staff in the prison are supported by the physical strength and discipline of the discipline staff: the prisons, the schools within the prisons and the healthcare provision within the prisons operate, despite some prison managers' focus on care and therapy, within a model of male coercive

control. For Eaton (1993, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 23), control is manifest in women's prisons in the presence of men who reiterate a model of coercive control with which female inmates are already familiar. This is a model with which, as will be seen, women imprisoned in Ireland are very familiar.

In the new women's prison while the focus of management and staff is on security and control, concepts of respect for the women are anchored for the prison's managers in notions of care and therapy. One of the Governor's favours titles such as Matron rather than Governor and Care Staff rather than Prison Officer(s), suggesting that the female prisons need care, compassion and therapy, rather than security. Many authors (Chapter Two: page 51), Carlen among them, have critiqued therapy, describing therapy as 'moral management', and discussing 'new theology of therapy' and 'perpetual therapy', its subversion of the individual, its legitimisation of unanimous decisions, and its pressure towards conformity, and to its elements of control manifest in its implements: drugs, straitjackets and cellular confinement, referents for power. Heidensohn (1968, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 51) suggested that the different and special approach to treating women in prison is 'based on the notion that those few offending seriously and frequently enough to warrant imprisonment must be physically and/or mentally in need of therapy', so, she says, the female prison system is therapeutically oriented. The new female prison was described by one of the professionals interviewed as 'an annex of the Central Mental Hospital'. Within the prison imprisoned women are respected as the ill are respected; they are jollied along, encouraged, gently persuaded, teased, told and ultimately coerced into engaging with the system of the prison.

Control in the Dochas Centre is in part exercised in the emphasis of regime there on the development and the nurturing of very close relationships between staff and imprisoned women, such close relationships having long been a feature of women's imprisonment in Mountjoy Prison. Prison staff have a great deal of knowledge about the women and their families and these relationships are among the most prized resources of the prison. One

of the nurses in interview with me said that she used to be in awe when she started to work in the Dochas Centre of the level of knowledge the officers had of the women and their families. Foucault (1977, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 38), contends that power is based on detailed knowledge, that we are controlled by discourses used to observe and define us; he draws, (2001: 32), on the work of Nietzsche when he contends that what is behind all knowledge, *savoir*, and behind all attainment of knowledge, *connaissance*, is a struggle for power. There is in the close relationships fostered in the Dochas Centre, an appropriation in a sense of the lives of the women by the staff of the prison. The intimate knowledge prison staff have of the imprisoned women establishes for them and for their colleagues their dedication to these women. For the women it encourages a surrender of themselves, of their independence and of any privacy they might have, to the staff of the prison and to the prisons' professional discourses.

The women have no control, no autonomy. They must ask a member of staff for everything they need and they must wait to be given everything they need by a member of staff. Some of the women will curry and cajole, pleading elaborate cases. They will move and/or amuse the staff and management with their stories and with the manner in which they present them, perform them, and the benevolent staff and management, amused and/or moved by the pleas of the begging women will respond and may reward the begging with a gift from the prison's gift economy. Both Mauss (2002 Ed.) and Douglas (1992), have written on the gift. Mauss writes (2002: 37), of the continuous flow in all directions of presents given, accepted, reciprocated, obligatorily and out of self-interest, for services rendered and through challenges and pledges. These prison gifts are very different. They are more akin to Douglas's concept of the gift (1992: 157), that there are no free gifts, that gift cycles engage persons in permanent commitments which articulate the dominant institutions. Gifts within the remit of the staff of the prisons include cigarettes, sweets, crisps, chocolate and biscuits, they include extra toiletries, visits in the Dochas Centre from one yard to the other, time spent in a friend's room, extra phone calls or longer phone calls. Gifts within the remit of management include money,

they include clothes and shoes, trainers and tracksuits, they include accommodation in progressively less secure accommodation within the prison, and they include temporary release, days out or weekends at home. With these gifts women are rewarded for conformity within the prison.

One of the officers in Limerick Prison said that the women imprisoned there 'have no discipline'; he said that 'dealing with male prisoners is a 100 times easier'. Pollack, (1984, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 49), highlighted the informal agreement among prison officers that imprisoned women are more difficult to deal with than imprisoned men. This officer said that that prison was 'kept busy with women imprisoned for not paying fines, for not paying back loans to credit unions, for not having a TV license, for not paying parking fines'. He said that the biggest problem in Limerick Prison was the fact that the women have nothing to do, they have no work opportunities. He said that while there might be a class on (in the school) maybe only one or two of the women would attend. He said that it was a bad mix, too much time on your hands and problems outside the prison. He said that 'the women demand constantly and they have childish ways of trying to manipulate'. It may be that these childish ways the women have of trying to manipulate are related to the gift culture of the prisons which reward, arbitrarily, particular behaviours. It may be that these performances of the women are related to these women's ways of being in the prison and the world, ways of being which are products of the patriarchal culture and the performance of the feminine demanded by and rewarded in that culture.

Imprisoned women are viewed and managed differently by long serving discipline staff and by new discipline staff. In addition to this, in the Dochas Centre the women are viewed and managed differently by Dochas Centre prison officer staff and by prison officers from Mountjoy Prison conscripted to duty in the Dochas Centre when the Dochas Centre is understaffed. There is in fact a struggle between the traditional macho Prison Officer culture and the new supportive Prison Officer culture of the Dochas Centre. One of the most visible signs of the clash of cultures is the wearing of uniforms. Generally Prison Officers of the Dochas Centre wear civilian clothing, some

wear a combination of uniform and civilian clothing, a few wear full uniform. Prison Officers in Limerick Prison wear the uniform. Prison Officers from Mountjoy Prison drafted in to work in the Dochas Centre also wear the uniform. The officers from Mountjoy Prison call themselves 'the jailors'. They don't like working in the Dochas Centre because the new women's prison, they tell me, 'is not like real prison'.

The representatives of management of the Prison Officers Association (POA), I interviewed said that the needs of imprisoned women: 'physical, psychological and everything else', are different to the needs of imprisoned men. They said that women in prison need the support of staff, that they draw strength from prison staff and they draw strength from each other. They said that women communicate more with prison staff while men in prison: 'put on a macho image and get on with doing their time'. The women were said to talk and talk, the men wouldn't talk freely, wouldn't open up, the men were more contained. They said that when a female prisoner is ill the other women are around her, encouraging her, bringing her around, whereas if a male prisoner is ill the men leave him alone to get over it.

The POA representatives told me that, at Beladd, prison officers are trained to be suspicious of prisoners, trained not to get too close to prisoners, told that the further they stay away from prisoners the better they are doing their job. This is further evidence of the manner in which imprisoned women are subject positioned. Then, the POA representatives said, prison officers may be sent to the Dochas Centre where, they said, women prisoners engage with prison officers, they engage with prison officers in a way that men in prison never do. These interviewees said that the officers are told: 'that all the rules that apply in the male prison don't apply over here'. They said that:

**'prison officers are not trained to respond to the needs of women prisoners, there is no structure in place to indicate to them how they might appropriately respond, and no structure in place to affirm an appropriate response if one was made'.**

It seems that, as with the discourses of prisoner managers in the 1800's, (see Chapter Four: page 104), those currently working closest and longest with

women prisoners do not agree with the discourses of those designing and managing the system within which imprisoned women are positioned.

Women prisoners were said in the interviews not to constitute a significantly large group within Irish prisons. The Irish legal system was found in the Literature Review (Chapter Two: page 33), to be informed by stereotypical assumptions and myths regarding male and female roles which were said to disproportionately disadvantage women. Fennel (1993, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 33), described the Irish legal system as partisan in nature, informed by stereotypical assumptions and myths with regard to male and female roles, which she says, operate to disproportionately disadvantage women: The testimony of a number of the interviewees for this research supports this finding. These interviewees said that the judiciary in Ireland sees women in different ways to the ways in which they see men; the Director General of the Prison Service in interview suggested that because (criminal) men have dominated the (criminal justice) system over the years there has been 'a certain cultural confusion' among the judiciary when dealing with women.

A number of interviewees, Governors of Prisons and the representative of Probation and Welfare, felt that one of the biggest concerns in criminal justice in Ireland was the way in which females are dealt with in the criminal justice system, they said that men get many more chances than women, that men would not receive custodial sentences for the trivial offences for which women might get six or nine months. The Probation and Welfare Officer said that this was due to: 'the patriarchal nature of the bench' and to the effect of 'middle to upper class male judges' passing judgements on women in difficult circumstances, 'all middle class men in the powerful positions and making decisions about disadvantaged women'. One of the interviewees said that when a woman goes to court, her case may not be dealt with, she'll be held on remand for another four or five months'. Prisoners can be held indefinitely on remand in Ireland. Worrall (1981, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 35), outlines how lengthy remands are imposed upon women in order to give the judiciary time to amass reports on the female offenders and then punish women more. Many authors (Chapter

Two), explored the concepts of chivalry, male paternalism and the 'gender contract' (Lyons and Hunt (1988), Chesney-Lind (1973), Heidensohn (1989), Simon (1975), Klein (1977), Bowker (1978), Worral (1989), (see also this work, Chapter Two :34), to explain the more lenient treatment of women by the criminal justice system. They found that women who play the stereotypical female role will be treated more leniently, but, as Carlen highlighted (1988. see also this work, Chapter Two: page 36), women who do not or who cannot play the stereotypical role are more severely punished.

With the opening of the Dochas Centre a new prison regime was developed. At the centre of this regime is a cross-disciplinary management forum designed to facilitate information sharing and team building. The forum was established to facilitate a more efficiently operating prison. I found the forum to be focused on issues of security and control, focused on the prison's culture of institutionalisation, a culture which the forum determined was to be challenged as much as possible, and focused on normalisation, that the environment of the prison should be 'normalised' as much as possible. Foucault (1977, see also this work, Chapter Two: 49), refers to the 'normalising gaze' of the prison with its great instruments of power, surveillance and normalisation. Sim in his analysis of the experiences of female prisoners of medical power in prisons stated (1991, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 49), that the female experience of normalisation was quite distinct from the male experience. He said that returning women to their normal roles warranted a degree of intervention and surveillance which was much more intense than the experience of men. A great deal of concern was expressed at the meetings regarding the women being imprisoned. Many members of the group expressed concern about the use of women's imprisonment for punishing petty crime. They talked about the high numbers of women inappropriately committed because of their psychological make-up. They spoke of the courts using the women's prison to unload social problems. They said that women are sent to prison because there is no place else for them to go. They said that the crimes that women are committed to prison for are generally very trivial. They said that a woman might get six months for taking two deodorants, for taking six packets of razor blades, for non-payment of a fine, for not paying the proper



bus fare, for not having a TV license. They said that homeless women and/or women who are a nuisance on the street will be imprisoned. They were concerned about the frequently inappropriate use of imprisonment and the needless criminalisation of some women. John Lonergan said that prison was the main agency picking up mentally ill women, homeless women. The women the group were concerned about were women who could not conform to stereotypical female roles. The consequence of this for these women is imprisonment.

The group was concerned with the problem of homelessness among the women<sup>3</sup>; the drug problem in the prison was the focus of a lot of the attentions of the group, drugs in the prison and the drug culture of many of the women in the prison<sup>4</sup>; as was the concept of drug-free houses within the prison and the practical implications of the use of drug-free houses for the management of the prison. The lack of a counselling service, particularly drug counselling, within the prison was an issue, as was the loss at the time of the prison psychology service. The psychologist had resigned and the members of the group felt that replacing her was not a priority for the Prison Service<sup>5</sup>. One of the interviewees illustrated the state driven surveillant role of the psychology service within the Irish Prison Service saying that: 'the main reason psychologists exist within Irish prisons is to attempt to stop re-offending'. As Carlen stated (1986, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 48), within prison, the state pays the medics and psychiatrists who examine imprisoned women. The women don't consult the medics; the state consults the medics about the women.

The group was concerned about accommodation available to women leaving the prison; they were concerned about the hostels available to the women, in Dublin, Haven House, Regina Chaeli, and Morning Star, and the standard of

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<sup>3</sup> The team considered the work of the Prison Service, the Department of Justice and Dublin Corporation with regard to accommodating women from the prison. They discussed the efforts of the NOW (New Opportunities for Women) project in terms of Everton House, blocked by the local community, the efforts of the St. Vincent de Paul in the development of their hostel and the efforts of the Mercy sisters, also blocked by the local community, in terms of the provision of accommodation for women leaving prison.

<sup>4</sup> In particular the team was exercised about the normalisation of cannabis in society in general and in the prison in particular. The view of the women as expressed by the team was that they were clean if they were smoking cannabis; they were only using drugs if they were using opiates. The team allowed that many professionals in the community took the same view when dealing with drug addiction.

<sup>5</sup> In interview one of the Governor's said that the salary offered by the Prison Service to psychologists just wasn't attractive enough'.

that accommodation. Through the discussions at the forum the class structure of experiences of imprisonment emerged; women from certain geographic locations were sent to prison, women from certain postal districts in Dublin, Dublin 1, 7, 9 and now 24, women from the inner city, from Sherriff St., women from Ballyfermot, Finglas, Clondalkin, and Tallaght, a few women from Bray and a few Travellers, and women from certain other cities, Cork, Athlone and Limerick. The women were described generally as having poor prospects, as being drug dependent, as being in poor general health, they were women with perhaps multiple pregnancies, women with the virus, women from very deprived backgrounds, they had nutritionally poor general health, they were strong recidivists, young malnourished drug addicts. A newer very young member of Prison Officer staff at the Dochas Centre said that when she started to work in the prison she was shocked by people coming back to prison after serving a sentence. She said:

**'I thought, Jesus, you do a spell and that's it, never again, you'd be reformed, you'd be the best person ever, and that just isn't the case and that's what shocked me. I suppose I didn't know much about drugs and the hold drugs get on people.'**

The women were represented as women with serious mental illnesses, women who would be more appropriately cared for in the acute psychiatric services. Very few of the women were involved in serious crimes; they were mostly in prison for petty crimes. There were no major drug barons in the female prison, no mass murderers; most of the women were petty criminals with severe social problems coming from backgrounds of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, from three of four generations of poverty.

There was a focus and preoccupation among the participants at these meetings with activities in the prison, with planning, organising and running activities and with encouraging and monitoring participation in them<sup>6</sup>; the

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<sup>6</sup> The activities discussed or available to the women in addition to the formal education and training programme of the prison included activities such as horticultural projects, gardening, the Christmas entertainment programme including Christmas lunch, Christmas party, Kris Kindles, competitions for the best decorated house, St Patrick's Day celebrations, a cheili, some set dancing, some children in Irish dancing costumes invited in, Easter celebrations, a summer programme including the Summer School, games rooms, pool tables, organised games, visits from football players, drama, card making, a choir, newsletters, quizzes, bingo, barbecues, Health and Fitness programmes, step aerobics, outdoor pursuits weeks, VEC debating competition, creative writing competition, creative writing workshops with writers like Julie Parsons, Marion Keynes, Maeve Binchy, a visit by the Furey Brothers, guest lectures, visits from poets, workshops such as industrial cleaning and industrial sewing, the beauty shop, the CONNECT project. Days were planned such as Homelessness Day, International Women's

group was particularly interested in the ability and the propensity of women in the prison to commit to activities, with disciplining women to commit to activities in the prison, and then disciplining them into honouring those commitments. Group members represented themselves as managing the women, they were in control of the women, their agenda was to accommodate the women safely, providing in consultation with the women activities for the women and engaging the women in those activities. They structured their roles with the imprisoned women, as did all the members of staff, around their disciplines and around their concepts of care provided within an ethos of security and control.

The interviewees spoke of the experiences the women had of home and family. They said that there was no place for the women at home. They said that at home the women had no security, no sense of trust. They said that the women within their families were subjected to all kinds of suffering and abuse. Yet these experts represented the women almost entirely in terms of their familial obligations. Walby (1990), (and Bartky (1990), Radke and Stam (1994), and Bourdieu (2001), see also this work, Chapter Two: page 24), explored the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of different aspects of women's subordination in contemporary society, through women's everyday experiences, of the family, of confinement to the private sphere, of housework and wage labour, of the threat and fear of male violence, and of men's flight from responsibilities, flight from fatherhood. Walby wrote of patriarchal sexual relations, of sexual violence, of compulsory heterosexuality and of the sexual double standard all as aspects of women's subordination within patriarchy.

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Day, National Aids Day, Blooms Day. Visits were arranged to services such as the Rape Crisis Centre, visits from the Northside Partnership, the Alternatives to Violence (AVP) programme, from the Samaritans and there was a visit by the European Languages bus. Workshops were planned around HIV, contraception, STDs, women in prostitution, clean and cleaning needles. A visit by the relics of St Therese of Lisieux was organised. The group developed a yearly planner on which the activities could be plotted and an Activities Committee was set up, comprised of officers and imprisoned women, to plan and organise the events and activities proposed for the year.



**Photograph Five: The Dochas Centre: the Health Care Unit is on the right and the visiting area on the left.**

The interviewees spoke at length of the women in terms of their families and their familial obligations. They represented imprisoned women as carrying the full burden of the family and the home. They said that these women had huge responsibilities in their lives and very little support. One interviewee said:

**‘The women in the prison are the most marginalised. They are caught in a trap of drugs and prison, a vicious circle. They come from three or four generations of poverty. They have no education. There is no place for them at home. The only place is the street and their streets, their whole environments, are full of drugs. They come from very deprived backgrounds. They have no security at home. A lot of them have been sexually abused. A lot of them just seem to accept that as their lot in life.’**

Another said:

**‘The women are responsible for the family, and life has been very tough for them. They’ve been abused by the men in their lives. They are in very unhealthy relationships. They have come out of very dysfunctional families and they are going back into them, complicated chaotic families.’**

Another:

**‘The majority of the women who come in here are poor, their parents are probably split up, maybe another man has moved into the house. There’s a lot of abuse, a lot of drugs. The women from a young age have been well exploited.’**

Compared with men, women were said to be the main caregivers and so women needed much more intensive work. The evidence for this perhaps

explains the frequent claims that women in prison are more demanding than men in prison. It seems it is the overwhelming responsibilities of women that cause them to make more demands on prison staff than do imprisoned men. One interviewee said:

**'women worry about having a roof over the family's heads, about money coming in from the social welfare, about ill family members. Their homes have to be taken care of, their children, their old parents, their aunt and uncles, grandparents. Their dogs have to be taken care of. Imprisoned men don't worry like that, they sit back. The men would have a lot of queries, for instance, will you ring my solicitor, can you see the Chief or the Governor about this or that, could I be moved to another wing or another prison, I'd like to do a drug awareness programme, I'd like to do pre-HIV test counselling, and lastly, and not too many requests like this, would you ring a family member for me.'**

The interviewees generally expressed their belief that men in prison are able to cut themselves off more, that men remove themselves easier from a family situation, that the separation from children and family: 'hits women more than men' that: 'when men come into prison they leave their problems at home, women bring them with them'. A male Governor interviewed said that: 'men who are involved in crime would not show the same care or concern for their families at home....men don't seem to have the same level of responsibility especially with young families'. All of this evidences the feminist critique of women and men and the family and the general gendered experience of the social world, (see above and see Chapter Two: page 24).

One of the chaplains interviewed said that it was important for the women to have children but the women couldn't parent, that the women wanted to be good parents but they didn't know what that was because they hadn't received it themselves, it was also important for the women to have a man but that they were in and out of relationships, they had nothing stable. Another interviewee said that the women had: 'grown up around prison; their mothers are raising their kids and that was their mothers' experience as well, everyone gets to be a mother but its to the grandchildren'. The women were represented as somehow failing in these roles, as falling short of the ideal of motherhood. Walby (1990: 64), takes a different perspective; she writes of women's problematic experiences of the family relative to ideological representations of the family: 'as a consensual unit with a fair

division of duties'. Despite difficult experiences of the family the women embraced motherhood. They are immersed in a heterosexual culture within which it is appropriate for a woman to be in a relationship with a man, and even though these women suffer greatly in these relationships, heterosexual familial ideology is so powerful in their cultures that the women actively pursue these frequently overwhelmingly responsibilities and damaging relationships. Within prison the women are subject positioned, as they are in the press, as dangerous. This is very evident in the emphasis in the prisons on security. The women are to be rehabilitated within official discourses of normalisation and normative femininity.

#### **5.4 Prison Structures**

Prison structures shape the way in which women from day to day experience prison. In Ireland, the structures of the prisons are primarily the manner in which the women are received into prison, prison healthcare, prison educational provision, and the women's accommodation. In the following pages I describe these structures and the manner in which imprisoned women experience them.

In the Dochas Centre the women are held apropos the vision statement 'in a caring safe environment'<sup>7</sup>. In Limerick Prison women are imprisoned in a basic lock-up regime within which they are constantly monitored; they are held, apropos the mission statement of Limerick Prison, 'in humane, safe and secure custody'<sup>8</sup>. The women in Limerick Prison moved accommodation twice within the prison while I was conducting this research, and they moved into what the prison and the Prison Service each time described as new and/or improved accommodation. In the Dochas Centre with the progressive atmosphere of a new prison, new structures have been instigated around the new order: in the new purpose built school;

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<sup>7</sup> The vision statement of the Dochas Centre is as follows: 'We are a community which embraces people with respect and dignity. We encourage personal growth in a caring safe environment. We are committed to addressing the needs of each person in a healing and holistic way. We actively promote close interaction with the wider community'.

<sup>8</sup> The mission statement of Limerick Prison is as follows: 'Our mission is to hold in humane, safe and secure custody, the people committed to our care in an environment in which individuals can develop, reducing the risk of reoffending by encouraging participation in rehabilitative programmes and to promote interaction with other caring agencies'.

in the modern Healthcare Unit; in the introduction of the multi-disciplinary bi-monthly meetings for staff and management; in the civilian dress of the discipline staff of the prison; and in the 'family or home-like' structure of the prison. There are no such new structures in Limerick Prison.

#### **5.4(i) Reception**

Entry to the Dochas Centre is gained through an electronically controlled sliding door. The first door opens and entry is gained into the small outer reception area. This area is known in the prison as Control. The Director of the Irish Penal Reform Trust in interview said of this door:

**'I think the door is symbolic of the new female prison, the beginning is the door and the end is the padded cell. That tells me that nothing deep has changed, there are good superficial changes but the ethos is still about control'.**

The visitor gives their details and the purpose of their visit to the officers behind the glass window at control and will then be asked to wait in the tiny reception room opposite the glass window, a separate small room with six or eight comfortable chairs and a low coffee table, until the person they are visiting is located and directed to come to control, if it is a staff member, to pick them up or to give directions as to where they are to be escorted. The visitor then moves through the second electronically operated door, (only one of these doors can be open at a time) into the main reception area. In this area there is a door leading into Control, a door leading into the visitors' area, a door leading to the administration offices of the prison, and a door leading into the prisoners' reception area.

In the prisoners' reception area there are two search rooms, one toilet, two showers, a bathroom, a reception desk and a laundry area. In this area, prisoners coming into the prison are strip searched, encouraged to shower and wash their hair, their belongings are searched and stored, and here they are held until a nurse comes from the Health Care Unit to process the prisoner into the prison. This process has been examined by a number of authors, among them Eaton (1993), O'Dwyer and Carlen (1994), and Lundström-Roche (1985), (see also Chapter Two: page 23, this work). They all write about the capacity of this process to strip individual identity while

simultaneously ascribing prisoner identity. This is the ritual within which every woman's sense of self is subsumed into the identity 'prisoner'. The strip-searching ritual is, to use Garfinkel's (1956, see also Chapter Two: page 23, this work), term, a degradation ceremony. It is, as Garfinkel suggested (1956: 420), about identity degradation. Garfinkel states (1956: 421), that through the ritual the individual becomes 'reconstituted'. In relation to women's experiences of imprisonment, it is through the strip-searching ritual that individual identity is removed, prisoner identity ascribed, and a female prisoner is brought into being. The ritual of strip-searching is experienced by all of the women all of the time. Every time they come and go from the prison this stripping in front of discipline staff or stripping by discipline staff takes place. There is no discretion in the stripping. All of the women are subject to it. They are subject to it regardless of their crime or prison status, regardless of their drug status, regardless of their age, and regardless of their physical and psychological states of being. The Prison Officer staff of the reception area said that the women are searched top first then bottom. The officers say that the women are never naked, and that there are no internal body searches.

The women in Limerick Prison, at the time of the primary research collection, were held in C class<sup>9</sup>. The approach to the female corridor in the prison was along the inner wall of the prison, (see Photograph Four: Chapter Four: page 128), to a metal door, when the bell on the door rang, an officer unlocked the door, and then unlocked an indoor gate into the women's prison. Inside the gate was the reception area. This was equipped with two showers; two toilets, and two wash hand basins, all shrouded by one very big cream-coloured plastic curtain. When women are committed to Limerick Prison the Prison Officers there told me that they are body-searched, a pat down over clothes, not strip-searched. They are required to shower and encouraged to wash their hair. Before showering they hand out

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<sup>9</sup> The women had moved into this 'new' accommodation in 2001, (see Chapter Four: 102). A deputy Governor at Limerick Prison said that the move by the women to the redecorated and in part refurbished male wing of the prison was 'what you might call our second phase of development...our third phase will be the examination of a totally new facility for females approaching the facility that is the Dochas Centre, room accommodation rather than cell accommodation, a structured arrangement of treatment and sentence management'. Unfortunately the 'third phase' resulted in a totally different development whereby the women were moved into accommodation similar to the accommodation the women in Mountjoy Prison left behind in St Patrick's Institution in 1999, cellular accommodation with incell sanitation. When I visited the women in Limerick Prison in 2003 they had



their clothing to be searched by the officers. After showering the woman is given what clothing she requires and escorted to her cell where she is given whatever she needs of what toiletries and bedclothes are available. The degradation ceremony inflicted on the women in the Dochas Centre is also inflicted on the women committed to Limerick Prison, their bodies are searched, and they are obliged to strip off their clothing and shower.

In 2001 the women committed to the prison were taken along the ground floor corridor. This corridor contained a schoolroom, formerly a five-man cell, a computer room with two computers and a printer, and two strip/isolation cells<sup>10</sup>. Then they were led upstairs to the accommodation of the female wing (corridor). On this corridor there was an office where the officers congregated and a very small Governor's office, to accommodate the Governor's parade (see page 192) or professional visits to the wing. There was a small food servery, which doubled as a 'domestic science' room, and there were sixteen cells, some of them equipped with bunk beds for double occupancy. The model of sanitation on the ground floor was repeated in two locations on the accommodation corridor, two showers, two toilets and two wash hand basins, shrouded in one big cream plastic curtain.

Throughout this committal experience the women's degraded identities are conveyed to them. With every step, the discourses of the prisons communicate to the women their new prisoner identities; their ordered existences, the militaristic nature of that order, the compulsion to obey, the physical coercion, the grim bleak surroundings, the punishment technologies, prison walls, locked doors, and punishment cells. The process exemplifies both the constitutive power of discourse, (Chapter Two: page 22), and Butler's theory of the constitutive power of reiterative and citational practice (1993, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 21, see above page 157). The constitutive power of these prison discourses brings

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moved into a renovated block and the photographs of the accommodation of this 'new' women's prison may be viewed in Chapter Seven.

<sup>10</sup> An officer said that they couldn't manage without a strip cell, he said that there are violent women in the prison and he said that they calm down in the strip cell. He said that normally they are held there for no more than a couple of hours. He said that the strip cell also acts as a deterrent. This officer said that the women sometimes come into prison with syringes hidden in body cavities. He said that women with full-blown Aids have spat at and squirted Aids infected blood at staff.

into being female prisoners. The female prisoner is constituted through the discursive practices of the prison, its language and its materiality.

In Limerick Prison, when the women moved to the accommodation they currently occupy, the standard of the accommodation remained apparently the same, although it was new and the particular shades of pastel paint and the patterns of the chintzy quilt covers and curtains were new and the wing (corridor) they left was old. Heidensohn noted that (1975, see also this work, Chapter Two: 40) in sexually segregated prison systems, female regimes differ only in detail from male regimes, 'despite gallons of pastel paint and.... flowery curtains over windows the effects of the old institutions remain'; both Bowker and Chesney-Lind remarked that women were afterthoughts in prisons built primarily to hold men.



**Photograph Six: One of two duplicate corridors in Limerick Prison (new accommodation)**

In the second move in Limerick Prison the cells were provided with in-cell sanitation, utterly inappropriate to and completely insensitive of women's needs, and actually torturous given that the women occupy double occupancy cells, (see Photograph 19: Chapter Seven). The toilets are unhygienic, given their proximity to the work surfaces of the women's cells, and the fact that the women eat all their meals in their cells. This accommodation had, I felt, a sealed tomb quality. Sounds in the wing echoed hollowly around it. The women were slightly panicked by the new wing. This was evident in the comments several women who moved from this accommodation to the Dochas Centre made to me when they specifically intercepted me in the Dochas Centre to express to me their concerns. They said things like 'they shouldn't be allowed to do that' or 'they shouldn't be allowed to keep the women in that place'.

#### **5.4(iii) Healthcare**

In the Dochas Centre when a prisoner is ready to move from the reception area into the prison, a nurse escorts her to the Healthcare Unit. The role of the nurse in the committal process is significant, signalling as it does a therapeutic aspect to the committal process and the experience of imprisonment. It masks to a degree the compulsion that pervades the entire experience. The nurse encourages, and in a way manipulates, compliance with the regime. The Healthcare Unit is a three-storey building at the centre of the prison. Its size and position in the prison, both physically and symbolically, signal some curative capacity on the part of the prison, as well as the prison's discursive positioning of imprisoned women as ill. The ground floor of the Healthcare Unit is entirely secured, reflecting again the discourse of danger within which the women are positioned. It is comprised of a dental surgery, a nurses' station, a psychologist's room, a treatment room, a surgery and a pharmacy. The chaplaincy is also on the ground floor of the Health Care Unit, outside of the secure area. When the prison is overcrowded, it is contained by prison management in the Healthcare Unit. The second report of the CPT (2003, see also this work, Chapter Two: pages 55) requested that measures be taken to ensure that all women imprisoned are provided with appropriate accommodation.

First thing every morning the women come to the Healthcare Unit for drugs, mostly physeptone (phi'). They come straight from bed, in dressing gowns and nightwear. One of the nurses told me that, on that particular day, 35 of the women in the prison were on phi', just under half of the prison population. The militaristic surveillant nature of the institution was evident in the manner in which nurses dispense drugs, under Prison Officer escort. The women's first-thing-in-the-morning expedition for drugs, represents one of the main trajectories (Chapter Two: page 39), prisoners initiate from their rooms. The signs of the prison conveyed to the women on this particular trajectory are conveyed to them through the routine of the expedition and the disciplined nature of the distribution.

In the following paragraphs I detail some of my observations in the Healthcare Unit. In the afternoon, a nurse went to meet a committal, then registered the new prisoner in the Health Care Unit. All this took about 15 minutes. The women were queuing again for medication at 4pm, all the medication is dispensed, under prison officer surveillance and within their control, by 4.45pm, very busy again but slightly less busy than the morning. Then it was teatime, sausage rolls, beans and bread, then back to work again. The new committal had been released already. Another woman had arrived, committed for assaulting a Garda. It was her first time in prison, she expected to go home after her court appearance; instead she was committed to the prison, she had two children at home. One of the nurses expressed to me her anger that this could happen to a family in our society, she said that:

**'the women come from areas where it is taken for granted that this can be done to them. They don't even have a sense of outrage about it. It seems so unfair; their kids are just thrown about. If it happened at other addresses in Dublin it wouldn't be tolerated'.**

The medication round began again at 8pm, this time the nurses, with their militaristic escort, took the medication to the women because by this time the women were all locked into their houses and most were locked into their rooms.

The second floor or top floor of the Healthcare Unit is comprised of accommodation units for women newly admitted to the prison and for women living in the Health Care Unit because the prison is over-crowded or because they are ill women, either physically or psychiatrically<sup>11</sup>. On the top floor one day during the observation, one woman was locked in a dark room, the darkness was her choice, when the door opened a strong unclean odour engulfed us, myself and the nurse I was with. The nurse commented, 'a social phobic who cannot self manage'. The next woman was also locked up, the nurse gave her tablets and morphine, 'she sniffs paint'. A very young girl, about 16 years old, was locked in a strip-cell, 'must have been misbehaving, she's in prison for stealing golf balls off a golf course'. There were three women in the padded cells, all accommodated there because the prison was overcrowded. The padded cells in the Dochas Centre are a major part of what Garland refers to as *architecture parlante* (1996: see also this work, Chapter Two: page 40), the symbolically significant architecture of the new women's prison. They are arguably the most powerful of the prison's signifiers. They signify to the imprisoned women, and the community of the prison and beyond, the women's degraded dangerised identities.

One of the nurses explained to me that a Governor could send women to the pad for punishment or if they are threatening to harm themselves. The nurse showed me the refractory gown and blankets made of hard cold synthetic fibre like fibreglass. These are given to women being held in the pads on punishment or for observation instead of blankets and nightclothes. The nurse explained that the women couldn't tear these garments to make

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<sup>11</sup> The small number of women, (no more than three women at a time from the prison system), in the Central Mental Hospital, (CMH), were described by one of the psychiatrists there as a biased group, very vulnerable, often with dual diagnoses of mental illness and drug abuse, some of the women had mental handicaps, some had low IQs, some had attention deficit disorder, they had mood problems and significant social problems. This psychiatrist said that the experience of the locked ward in St Brendan's Psychiatric Hospital (in Dublin) would not be very different from the experience of the CMH. This interviewee spoke of the forensic experience in dealing with challenging behaviour, the particular expertise of the staff of the CMH, what was called the three-pronged approach: talk down patient; behaviour out of control, might require 'Control and Restraint', hand locks etc.; finally they might require medication. The women's unit in the CMH has a padded cell that had been there since the hospital was built (1850) and nearly all the rooms could be turned into strip rooms: the women could be secluded in their own rooms on rugs and gowns, (recalcitrant rugs and gowns) which would have to be prescribed by a doctor and reviewed every three hours. There were no TVs in the rooms, no budget for them, the women are locked up from 9pm to 9am, some of the women had their own stereos and CD players, they were allowed sheets of paper to write on in their rooms but a lot of the women would have literacy problems. This interviewee said that: 'the forensic service would like to see people whose offences do not warrant incarceration diverted back into the community, people who were mentally unwell should not be remanded in custody but diverted into the appropriate service'.

ligatures. She said that they might use ribbons from nighties and belts from dressing gowns or tear nighties into strips to make ligatures. She said that sometimes the women try to choke themselves with their own hands, she assured me that they can't, explaining that as soon as they lose consciousness they begin to breathe again. With the refractory gown and blankets, the women, she said, can't come to any harm in the pad, provided they haven't a cigarette lighter concealed inside themselves.



**Photograph Seven: Padded Cell with Refractory Gowns and Blankets: Dochas Centre**

An officer explained to me how a woman would be taken under restraint to the pad. Through that explanation the extremely punitive nature of this process of control, the dominating and potentially sexually charged nature of the process, became apparent. The officer explained how, very slowly using '*Control and Restraint*' a woman is taken to the pads. In the process the woman is overpowered and restrained, one officer seizes the woman's head, two officers each of her arms, then they walk slowly, staying very close to the woman, to the pad. The woman is always gowned in the pad by the officers, in other words stripped of her clothes, stripped naked, and dressed in the refractory gown if held for security or punishment. Carlen (1998: 141), writes of the vulnerability of women prisoners when naked,

exposed to the lust, derision, or just cold casual inspection of their gaolers, whether they be male or female, homosexual or heterosexual.

The documented reasons, (in the appropriate record book at Control in the Dochas Centre), for using the pads were as follows: at the woman's own request; the woman was suicidal; the woman broke up or burned her cell; she was drunk on committal and was sent to the pad for observation; the woman was fighting; was setting fire to plastic; was sniffing air freshener; sniffing a solvent; was agitated; hysterical; depressed; she was cutting herself; she assaulted an officer at court; she's there on doctor's orders; there for her own safety; she had self-inflicted burns; she had barricaded herself in her cell; she had been attempting to escape; she was there for being disruptive; for threatening staff; she had attacked an officer; she was being very aggressive; she was sent there on return from CMH; she had been in breach of TR; unlawfully at large; she was taken there on return from hospital; at a psychiatrists request; she was on special obs, (special observation). Over the year 2000 there was a monthly average of 15 committals to the pads, the highest number was 28, committed in June, the lowest number was 6, committed in December.

The nurses told me that some women would ask to go to the pads. This seems to me to illustrate Carlen's contention (1983, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 52), that imprisoned women feel 'horribly at home' within psychiatry. In addition to this, it is likely that some of the women's representations of themselves as depressed, might relate to what Liebling (1994), (see also this work, Chapter Two: page 43: footnote: 41), found in relation to gendered use of words, that women use the word depression and men the word bored to describe the same sensation. Liebling et al, also found that where men could externalise problems, blaming the prison, the pressures they were under, the failures of others, women internalised them. There were in the Dochas Centre, over the month of January 2001, more than 600 incidences of women being placed on special observation. The reasons given were as follows: the woman was pregnant; the woman was depressed; she couldn't sleep; she had received bad news; she had family problems; she was suicidal; she was distressed; on return from a court visit;

on return from hospital; the woman was cutting herself; the woman appeared strange; she was physically ill; she was facing more charges; she'd had a past suicide attempt; on medical/psychiatric recommendation; the woman had had a possible miscarriage; she had been sentenced; she would not communicate; she was staying in her room; she was staying in bed; she'd had a death in family; she was fighting; she had refused TR; she was on return from Christmas TR; the woman was argumentative; her boyfriend broke off their relationship; this was her first time in; this was her first serious charge. It appears from this evidence that any negative behaviour on the part of the women is pathologised. The women were very quickly placed on observation. Some were taken to the pads to be stripped and held there for observation.

Many authors have explored negative and self-injurious behaviour among imprisoned women. Carlen (1986, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 50), suggested that while prison staff have a tendency to pathologise resistance to prison regimes, it is perhaps imprisonment itself that causes depressed or bizarre behaviour. Sim (1991, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 50), highlighted the fact that acknowledgement of the rationality of negative responses of those imprisoned to their circumstances has only relatively recently emerged. Sim described how the internalised anger and powerlessness of imprisoned women manifests itself in self-injurious behaviour, self-injury, arm slashing, head banging against walls, attempted suicide and suicide. He quotes (1991, see also Chapter Two: page 50: footnote 35), Carlen as saying that women's prisons are closed, frightening and damaging places; that sources of violence include both physical and pharmaceutical control; that imprisoned women have no effective way of countering prison controls or abuses; and that in the absence of legitimate grievance strategies, some prisoners 'can only stave off their prison-induced fears of death, madness and institutionalisation and general loss of identity by engaging in survival strategies' that may seem inexplicable' (from Carlen et al: 1985, quoted in Sim: 1991: 121).

One of the nurses interviewed said that the women serving long sentences were generally not drug addicts and she said they took up very little of the



nurses' time. She said that the women who are in for a long time have made some arrangements for their domestic situation and were consequently more settled, more stable in prison. She said that the other women are in prison for such a short time their home problems impinge on them. These women, she said, the staff of the Healthcare Unit see on a regular basis, many of them several times a day. She said that:

**'the women might have headaches, toothaches or period pains, they may have fallen and hurt themselves, they may have been in a fight and been hurt, or they may get a panic attack, or they might be upset about something'.**

She said that there was a high staff prisoner ratio in the women's prison because the health care needs of women in custody far outweigh those of men in custody, because of the women's poor general health. This is related to the extreme marginality of many of the women imprisoned. As detailed in Chapter One (page 3), the population of the women's prisons is small and unstable, in the sense that the women generally come and go often very quickly from the prison, for the most part serving very short sentences. In comparisons with the large stable male prison population, the women prisoners are often constructed as more difficult, more marginalised, more troubled.

The population of older more mature, better-resourced women tend to serve long sentences; they enjoy reasonably good health, reasonable standards of education. In the Dochas Centre these women are designated 'trustees' by prison management. By designating some women prisoner's trustees, the managers have 'othered' the rest of the population. Through this othering process the rest of the imprisoned women become 'other' than the trustees, less than them. Lianos and Douglas (2000: see also Chapter Two: page 19, this work), discuss what they call the primitive fear of otherness in relation to the concept of dangerisation. Trustees are not monitored as much as the women who are not trustees are monitored. They settle into their niche within the control environment of the prison, learning very quickly to wait for their needs to be met by a professional staff primarily focused, as detailed earlier in this Chapter, on the often critical needs of the impoverished, malnourished, uneducated, ill and generally addicted women,

and on the needs of the homeless women, deemed public nuisances, imprisoned, and needlessly criminalised by the justice system.

In Limerick Prison, the discursive subject positioning of women was evident in the language of that healthcare provision, in the gendered nature of that provision, and in the spatial experience of that provision. One doctor working from a small surgery located in the men's prison provided healthcare in Limerick Prison. The prison had no nurses but six male medical orderlies, prison officers mostly from nursing backgrounds, assigned to the medical service. The prison had one visiting psychiatrist who came to the prison one morning a week. The prison doctor in interview said that they could have 230 prisoners in Limerick Prison, including the women, (at the time of the interview Limerick Prison could accommodate 20 women) and 'very high rates of psychiatric illness'. He said that out of 12 women in the prison at that time, he would see two to four every day. The doctor discussed expressions of self-injury among the imprisoned women. He said that there would be 'incidences of cutting and self mutilation, tentative enough injuries, never a risk to life'. He said that there would be such an incident every few weeks, 'if a visit went badly or a privilege was denied, if there was an emotional upset', He said that the women's coping mechanisms were not what they should be. The Doctor said that:

**'looking after 15 female prisoners was probably the same as looking after 50 male prisoners; the women are more vocal, more inclined to express themselves, more inclined to be verbally abusive, women prisoners unhappy with their medication will pretty much make it obvious, men are more accepting'.**

The doctor readily spoke to me of the inadequate standard of accommodation in Limerick women's prison, of the lack of facilities, the poor small exercise yard, the 'gym of sorts', the fact that the prison is too confined and limited in terms of options of things to do, the fact that the women in Limerick Prison were generally unhappy with their basic facilities, their toilet facilities, the 'slopping out', the inadequate showers, and of the fact that there was a general unhappiness with the food. It seemed likely to me that the poor condition of the women's prison at Limerick Prison prompted the women's negative responses to their imprisonment,

rather than any instability in the women imprisoned there. This instability was evident in the doctor's testimony of very high rates of psychiatric illness, self injury, emotional upsets among the women, and his testimony of the women's inadequate coping mechanisms.

#### **5.4(iii) Education**

In the following pages I describe the women's experiences of prison education. Imprisonment raises many issues in terms of education. The punitive nature of prison space and its agenda of security and control contests the agenda of education, growth, development, self expression, self-actualisation, independent thinking and creativity. Frequently within prison space, security considerations override all other considerations, educational, social or personal. Sparks and Bottoms, (1995, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 21), write of control within prisons being manifest in, as well as the signs, symbols and rituals of the prison, in its education and healthcare. Foucault, (1977, see also this work Chapter Two: page 46), implicated educationalists in prison's technology of the soul. Teaching within prison means teaching in space managed for security considerations, (see Corcoran: 1985: 50), space governed by military-like rules and regulations and monitored by officials of a military-like prison service. As I have outlined, the power structure in the women's prisons in Ireland is of a quasi-military regime and a patriarchal order. Students within prison space must contend with all these issues, while their abilities and means to cope with the exigencies of imprisonment, as considered in the previous section, impact upon the educational experience afforded by prison.

The two female prisons, The Dochas Centre and Limerick Prison, provide very different educational<sup>12</sup> experiences for their respective inmates. In the

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<sup>12</sup> One person working in the Department of Justice, Mr. Kevin Warner, co-ordinates the programme of education in Ireland's prisons. The Director of Education in Mountjoy Prison, in interview with me detailed the development of education in Irish prisons as follows: 'In 1972 the Department of justice approached the VEC with regard to putting some education in St Patrick's institution. In those days there were some teachers sent down for some part of their timetable from Cabra Vocational School. From 1976 - 1977 some teachers started to come in full time, (there was) a Sister teaching literacy to the Travellers in the prisons'. Further detail on the educational provision was taken from various reports. The Department of Education provided just over 178 teachers from nine VECs, (Vocational Educational Committees), or whole-time equivalents, in 1999/00, (Warner: 1999: 4). Given a prison population of 3000 that figure represents a teacher pupil ratio of 17 students per teacher if all prisoners in Irish prisons attended and participated in the prisons' schools, but of course they do not, so the actual ratio is considerably lower although Kevin Warner did comment, (1999: 2) on the high rates of voluntary participation in education in Irish prisons. Warner, (1999: 1), quoting the Council of Europe report, 'Education in Prison', states that achieving the potential that educational activities offer to prison regimes is contingent upon the adoption of 'a

Dochas Centre 'school' takes place in a new, purpose designed, two story building, in Limerick Prison, 'school' in the women's prison takes place in a prison cell adapted, to some degree, for this purpose. In 2001 the range of educational and vocational opportunities offered to the women in the new education unit of the Dochas Centre encompassed woodwork, computers, English and maths, cookery, food and nutrition, soft toys, pottery, art, photography, group skills, swimming, outdoor pursuits, (a hill walking and canoeing opportunity offered two or three days in the academic year), parenting classes, music, clay modeling, drama, physical education and creative writing<sup>13</sup>. There is in the school a beauty salon/hairdressing salon, a craft room, an industrial cleaning programme, and since 2003, an industrial sewing programme. There was a project of the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform called CONNECT. This was designed to help socially and vocationally women in and leaving the prison. The project has faltered due to budgetary constraints. One woman was engaged in an Open University course of study and two women had commenced programmes of study with Oscail, Distance Education at Dublin City University, (DCU). I myself run the Summer School, (see Appendix 2). In the Dochas Centre teachers from the VEC run the school, Prison Officers run the beauty shop, the industrial cleaning, the craft workshop, and the gym. FAS, the State Training Agency, run the industrial sewing programme.

In the school in the Dochas Centre, the prison's focus on surveillance, security, and control is very evident. Prison Officers, for security reasons, keep a note of who's coming in and out of the school; students who sign up

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wide concept of education', offering a 'wide variety of learning opportunities to prisoners', (Warner: 1999: 1). In *The Management of Offenders*, The Department of Justice's 1994 policy document, the aims of prison education were outlined in terms of helping prisoners: cope with sentences; develop personally; prepare for life after release; and establish an appetite and capacity for further education.

<sup>13</sup> An analysis of school attendance records of the months of January and February 2001 conducted for this research established the broad range of classes offered within the prison and the low average attendance, in all 350 classes were delivered, attended by 1089 students, an average of 3 students per class, (See Appendix Fourteen). It should be noted that averaging the attendance masks the fact the some classes were very well attended and some were very poorly attended, in fact attendance at the classes was very erratic rather than consistently poor. In all, over the two-month period 45 classes were timetabled and subsequently cancelled by staff. In addition to this many of the students who signed up for classes did not attend. The reasons given for non-attendance were as follows: the woman concerned was cleaning; involved in drama; involved in voluntary work; at a meeting with Probation and Welfare; she was sick; taking a phone call; attending an interview; in a meeting with the Governor; taking a visit or a spiritual visit; gone to the Central Mental Hospital; gone to Limerick Prison; she was in bed; she was too late for class and so not allowed attend; she was at the hairdressers; she was studying; she was with an holistic healer; she was working, painting, cleaning or working in the kitchen; the woman forgot she had a class, declined to attend for no specific reason, took the class off or was attending another class; was with the psychiatrist, the doctor or the dentist; she was in court; she was too upset to attend class; she was out of the prison on bail or temporary release; she had no baby-sitter or had a sick baby and so could not attend; she was sick or in

for classes and then don't attend are 'locked back', locked into their rooms<sup>14</sup>. On one particular morning there were ten women in the school, seven in a crafts class and three in a photography class. The beauty shop opened at 10am. Eight women could be accommodated there but the numbers depend on the officer and the mix of women. There were a couple of prisoners in the beauty shop; they were going to a function in the gym. They wanted to look well and were having their hair done. Hutter and Williams (1981, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 51: footnote 38), found that pride in one's 'feminine' appearance and the ability to fulfil a stereotype were deemed to be significant factors in the 'recovery' of mentally ill and psychopathic female patients in Broadmoor. The prison gym is readily and regularly converted into a function hall. The officer in charge of the school remarked to me: 'the women don't care for the gym, they're not a sporty lot'. Two prisoners stalked out of a class, they'd been arguing, the officer hushed them and they made up sitting on stools outside the classroom. The officer said that the women were allowed to get away with too much, the officer said that if you let a child get away with something they keep pushing and pushing. One woman left a class, she asked the officer monitoring the school to call the Health Care Unit to tell them she is on her way back. The woman needs the officer to make that call, if the officer doesn't make that call, forgets or chooses not to make that call, the woman will have to stand outside the Health Care Unit until someone happens along with a key to open the door to admit her. Sometimes women prisoners clean the school: 'might get a few cigarettes', one remarks to me. The signifying elements of identity within this experience were the provision of school supported by the physical strength and discipline of the discipline staff, the locking and unlocking of doors, the locking up and locking back of women, the promise of a gift (see page 161), the infantilisation of the women, the paternalistic words of the officer, and the prison's beauty treatment provision. With these signs the prominent discourse is one of danger. Positioned with that discourse the women are

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hospital; she was with the CONNECT project or she was 'locked back', i.e. being punished for something by being locked in her room.

<sup>14</sup> The prison only stopped the practice of locking women back in their rooms for not attending Sunday mass with the move to the Dochas Centre in 1999.

subjectified as infantile and recalcitrant. The expression of femininity facilitated is normative.

The value placed on education in Limerick Women's Prison might have been calculated by the provision to the women's prison of a five-man cell adopted, if not adapted, for the purpose of a schoolroom. This prison cell was too small and airless; the windows in the cell were too small. There was no air circulation. It was a schoolroom in which, according to the head of education there, teachers were physically exhausted after two hours work. A schoolroom which was equally, if not more, exhausting, debilitating and discouraging for imprisoned women. In interview with me the head of education described as comprehensive<sup>15</sup> what is in fact a limited programme of training and education available to the women in that prison. The interviewee said that the programme ran over five days a week and it ranged from stress management, aroma therapy, reflexology and yoga to arts and crafts, home economics, health education, music, and computers; in addition to this there would from time to time be invited speakers. The main school in that prison, a prison accommodating up to 230-240 prisoners, was a two story building with five rooms used only by male prisoners. In addition to this, there were two class rooms on the top of D Class, a male wing of the prison, used only by male prisoners; there were two teachers in the gym, (the male prisoners gym); and a teacher in the craft workshops, (again in the male prison). The school timetable in the women's unit at the time of interview was as follows: on Monday morning, English Literacy, arts or crafts in the afternoon, and on Monday night PE; on Tuesday, Computers and Art in the morning and Music and Art in the afternoon; on Tuesday and Wednesday night Home Economics; Wednesday morning was at that time a free slot; Wednesday afternoon Music; Thursday all day Arts and Crafts; Friday morning Health Education and Awareness and Friday afternoon PE. PE in the women's wing took place in a low-ceilinged cell adopted for this purpose.

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<sup>15</sup> The Education Unit in Limerick Prison had, at the time of interview, for the entire prison population of about 230 prisoners, no more than twenty of those women prisoners, the equivalent of 16 full-time teachers, about 23 teachers coming into the prison.

The head teacher said that, on average, two thirds of the women would attend class, and she said that the response to classes would generally depend on what was happening that day. She said that the women complained about the poor part of the gender bargain they had secured in terms of educational provision in the prison. She said that they constantly complained that the men get more and better educational and training opportunities than them, but she said that the women in the prison, in terms of educational provision, had as much as the men. This was to some degree disingenuous given the structure of the schools in Limerick Prison and the uneven and gendered distribution of educational resources. The head teacher did concede that the men had workshops which the women didn't have, woodwork and tailoring; and that the men, at that time, were engaged in a stained glass workshop. This workshop, the interviewee said, was open to the women if they wanted to join. None of the women had joined the class.



**Photograph Eight: Door into females' school: Limerick Prison (new accommodation)**

The women, in this interview, were represented as complaining. It is possible that such complaining could be tiresome for prison staff. In time, it could lead to the women being described as troublesome, more troublesome perhaps than then men. As highlighted Pollack, (1984, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 49), found informal agreement among prison staff that imprisoned women are more difficult to deal with than imprisoned men. In this case, it is entirely evident that the education, work, and training provision in the male prison is vastly superior to the provision in the female prison. This was denied in the interview, and when the women in the prison complained about it, it is denied to them. When the women complained, despite the reasonableness of their complaints, they were negatively represented.

In both prisons the women replicated familial and household labour. They generally worked at cleaning, cleaning the landing, cleaning the house or the visiting area, cleaning the school, cleaning the stores, cleaning the corridors. In the Dochas Centre, two were employed in a *Training For Work* programme, contract cleaning. Three worked in the kitchen. The women did piece-work for companies outside the prison, packing greeting cards and sewing shoes. The women worked at these occupations for lengths of time ranging from seven or eight hours a day everyday for those who worked in the kitchen, to a few minutes every day for some of the cleaning tasks. In Limerick Prison, there are no work opportunities for women, the women there do chores. The women are remunerated for their work with money, thirteen Euro a week for the kitchen jobs, 50 Euro for sewing 100 pairs of shoes, 15 cent for packing a small box of greeting cards, and cigarettes, sweets, crisps and chocolate every now and then. A woman in Limerick Prison said that: 'if you do jobs (chores) you get the extra phone call or some tobacco'. Work for Ireland's imprisoned women is a pastime; it is designed, as is much of the educational endeavour, to occupy them. The rewards the women receive for the work they do are treats rather than recompense, the work signifies to the women the trivial nature of women's work generally while the rewards given to the women powerfully signify the slight value of their work.



#### **5.4(iv) Accommodation**

In the following pages I describe the accommodation provided for the women. In the Dochas Centre women are provided with ostensibly private personal facilities, in single en-suite rooms to which they have keys. The doors into the rooms are very solid wooden doors. The keys which the women have access to can be overridden by the regime. One day I met one of the women who had been accommodated in the Healthcare Unit, the woman who had been sniffing paint (page 178), crossing the yard. She had been moved out of the Healthcare Unit into a house. I went with her at her invitation to see her new room in Laurel House but we couldn't get into her room even though she had the key. I thought that perhaps she was confused about her room number but she wasn't, the officer in the house had locked all the rooms, overriding the keys to which the women had access. The officer suggested that if my (really very frail) friend didn't want to spend time in the gym, we go out into the yard. It was made perfectly clear, because it was in the middle of the day and all prisoners were supposed to be engaged in some activity, any organised activity, that we were not allowed stay in the house, in the kitchen or the living area. It was the coldest day, snow had been forecast and we went, like two orphans, out into the elements.

In the women's rooms each door is equipped with a peephole, a small rectangular clear space at eye level in the door covered on the outside by a hinged wooden flap. There are light switches inside and outside each of the rooms. The rooms are carpeted in a uniform light brown coloured carpet and painted in uniform pastel shades. Each room is uniform in size and fittings. Each has a window which cannot be opened and an air vent which can, a single bed, a half sized wardrobe, half sized to prevent suicide attempts, a bedside locker and a table and chair. The door separating the bedroom from the shower room is a semi-opaque three-quarter length door, the length of the door a design to prevent attempted suicides. The fittings in the shower room are fitted low down on the wall or in the wall, again designed to prevent suicide attempts. The focus is on security and on a presumed propensity to suicide among imprisoned women. The technology is of a Foucauldian panopticism rather than a Benthamite panopticism (Chapter

Two: page 41), a subtle power designed to produce, by acting on individual subjectivities, docile bodies.



**Photograph Nine: The women's exercise yard in Limerick Prison  
(new accommodation)**

**The yard is as depicted in the photograph. It is very small; there are no plants, no trees, no grass, and no seats, chairs or benches.**

The focus on security and control is even more evident in Limerick prison. The women there are currently accommodated on two floors on two corridors in cells designed for double occupancy. Each of the cells has bunk beds, a counter top, two lockers and a chair. There are no locks inside the doors, the doors can only be locked and unlocked from the outside. There are no light switches inside the cells in Limerick Prison so the women there have no control over the light in the cells. There are no clocks or watches allowed in Limerick Prison. The Prison Service is afraid that the women will make bombs with them, so the women depend on the TV or radio for time checks. The officers on the wing control the electric power and so they decide whether or not a woman has access to light, access to TV. A woman might have batteries for a radio and so be independent of the officers with regard to the radio, if she has no batteries or if her batteries have run out, she is dependent on the good will of the officers for access to the radio. Each of the cells is, as detailed above, equipped with a stainless flush steel

toilet bowl. In the lock-up regime of Limerick Prison the women spend most of every day locked into their cells.

In both prisons the main engagement of imprisoned women with prison management happens every day during the ritual 'Governor's parade'. The Governor on parade in the Dochas Centre visits each of the houses in turn and the women may meet her/him if they wish and make requests or have a dispute resolved. In Limerick Prison the Governor visits the wing and each woman may ask for a meeting. The following paragraph documents a visit to Rowan House in the Dochas Centre. The Assistant Governor, in this case, with the officer in charge of the house, met the women individually in the small staff office on the second floor off the recreation area of that house. At that meeting one of the women complained that she was still waiting for her clothes, which were at reception; the Governor said she would take care of this. Another said that she would like her (financial) account to be sorted out; the Governor said she would take care of this. Another had been unlawfully at large for 29 days, she said that her father had died; the Governor said that the time spent 'at large' would be added on to the end of her sentence. One woman had no cigarettes; the Governor arranged for her to get some. Another had no TV in her room; she said she would crack up, the Assistant Governor responded: 'you can't crack up here, if you do you'll be sent to the pad'.

The absolute power and control of prison staff over imprisoned women and the authoritarian militaristic nature of that power and control, implicit and explicit in every aspect of the imprisoned women's existence's within the prisons, establishes and constantly reinforces the penal nature of the institutions and the deviant stigmatised identities of the women imprisoned within them. These identities of the women, the stigmatised group, are further ascribed, and inscribed, through the constant reiteration of the prisons' rituals of control and punishment, through the symbolism, and frequently through the experience of the prison's most powerful recalcitrance technologies. In healthcare, the penal culture of punishment becomes part of the medical culture. Within the healthcare experience the women are psychiatrised and pathologised. The educational experience is

provided within the security and control structures of the prisons. The gendered provision of education in Irish prisons is very evident. Within the prisons' structures and routines the women live every moment of every day of their lives in prison. The capacity of the prisons' structures and routines for discursive reiterative practice is immense and it is through the prisons' ceaseless reiterative and citational practices that the female prisoner is discursively produced.

### **5.5 Summary**

In this chapter I explored the manner in which within the contemporary discourses of the criminal justice system, the print media, the Irish Prison Service, and the structures of the Irish female prison, the imprisoned women are subject positioned. I found the women to be positioned within discourses of danger despite the fact of the generally petty nature of women's offending and I found the women's identities to be steeped in family and home, despite the dreadful experiences acknowledged that many women have of home, family and relationships.

## Chapter Six

### Contemporary Profiles, Prison Experiences and Personal Identities

In this chapter I examine how the women currently in prison in Ireland experience themselves their imprisonment, within their own testimonies how they themselves construct and represent their own identities, and the degree to which they resist the identities ascribed to them. To begin with, I profile the women currently imprisoned. I establish how many women are imprisoned, where the women come from, the crimes for which they are committed, and the prison sentences imposed upon them. Following this analysis, I examine the women's prison experiences. Finally I consider the women's personal identities, their senses of self, as the women represent them within their life and prison experiences. Throughout the chapter I draw on interview, archival, observation and documentary data.

#### 6.1 Profiles

In this first section I develop three different profiles of the women currently imprisoned. The first profile is a socio-demographic profile of the women imprisoned over one year. The second profile is of the women in prison in the Dochas Centre on one day. The final profile is of the women interviewed for the research. With each profile, a clearer more comprehensive, or thicker description (see Geertz: 1993, see also Chapter Three: page 41, this work), of the population of the women's prisons emerges.

##### 6.1(i) The Women Imprisoned in the Dochas Centre over One Year

Currently about 1,000 women are committed annually to prison, to both the Dochas Centre and Limerick Prison. The vast majority of these women serve extremely short sentences. Over half are committed to prison on remand, one quarter are sentenced to days in prison, with or without fines, and 14% are sentenced to periods of time up to twelve months. Only 3% of the 1,000 women annually committed are sentenced to imprisonment for periods of one year or over. About half of these women are from Dublin, nearly one quarter are from areas outside of Dublin, one fifth are foreign nationals, and there are some Traveller women and some homeless women. Most of

the women are imprisoned for nuisance type offences, public order offences such as breach of the peace or public drunkenness. A substantial proportion of the women are imprisoned for larceny and stealing, offences generally related to the women's addictions. Some women are imprisoned for trafficking drugs, as are most of the foreign nationals serving long sentences. There have not been, since the foundation of the state, more than three or four women in prison at any time serving life sentences for murder<sup>1</sup>.

In 2001 over 750 women were imprisoned in the Dochas Centre. Of this group, 446 (59%) were Irish nationals and 305 (41%) were foreign nationals from 31 different countries. Details of the place of origin of the women prisoners is summarised in Table Two, below (see Appendix 16 for a more detailed listing).

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**Table One: Geographic Area of Origin**

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Europe (other than Ireland)	121	Dublin	135
South Africa	17	Wicklow	75
Africa	37	Waterford	58
Asia	43	Other Leinster	82
Russia/Scandinavia	2	Ulster	40
Eastern Europe	62	Connaught	39
South America	23	Munster	17
Total	305		446

(n=751)

Most of the women were young, poor and uneducated. Few had established significant relationships beyond their immediate families. Generally unemployed, most of them were sentenced to short stays in prison for petty or nuisance type offences. Their ages ranged from 16 (there were four committals of women aged 16 years) to 70 years of age; one woman of 70 was committed to the prison during the period examined. Almost 50% of the women were aged 25 years or younger; 75% were aged 32 or younger. The remaining 25% were aged 33 to 70, less than 5% of the

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<sup>1</sup> In June 2005, there were five women in prison on life sentences. One was a woman imprisoned since she was sixteen years old. She is to be released this year. One was Catherine Nevin (see Chapter Five: page 147). Among the other three were two Irish nationals, a woman who had killed her abusive partner, and a very tragic woman who had killed her own eight-year-old son. The

population were aged 50 years or older. Almost 90% were unmarried. The foreign nationals represented 41% of the prison population. Many of them were aliens held in the prison awaiting deportation. The largest national group of foreign women in the prison was Ukrainian; they were imprisoned for a range of offences, the most significant of which were stealing and the possession of drugs. There were 21 Spanish women charged with a range of offences from money laundering to begging and vagrancy. There were 16 South African women, most of them aliens awaiting deportation, three of whom were imprisoned on charges of possessing drugs; and there were 16 Nigerian women, mostly aliens awaiting deportation. One was being held on a charge of possessing drugs.

Many of the women had been convicted of a range of offences and the offences were listed on her record. The lists were individual and almost unique to each individual woman. Many of the lists were lengthy and complex. This is because a person before the courts will be charged with all outstanding warrants. For homeless people, people suffering from mental illnesses or addictions, there are often several outstanding charges. Mostly these would be relatively petty, charges for shoplifting, for being in breach of a warrant, for being drunk in a public place. In my analysis, the length and complexity of some of the lists of charges forced an aggregation of the data, (see Appendix 17 for listed data). With this aggregation, the data fell into 33 categories of offences or types of offence, detailed below in Table One.

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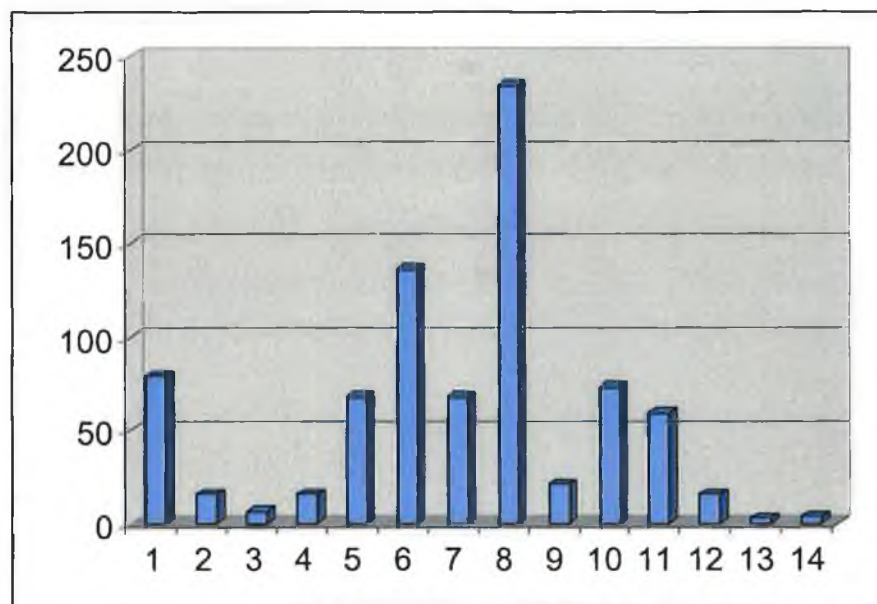
**Table Two: List of Categorised Offences Committed**

Fail to appear	Forgery	Money Laundering
Assault	Importation of Drugs	Drunk and Disorderly
Breach of the peace	Possession of Drugs	Casual/Illegal Trading
Murder	Assault on Garda	Larceny/Stealing/Robbery
Fraud	Soliciting/Prostitution	Possession of a weapon
Malicious Damage	Handle Stolen Property	Breach Bail
Damage to property	Loitering	Danger to self
Fail to produce ID	Alien	Road Traffic Act
No bus ticket	Contempt of Court	Domestic Violence
Debt	Vagrancy/Begging	No TV license

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third woman was from the UK, she had killed a man. There were also three women in prison serving sentences of eight to ten years for manslaughter.

Over the year, three women were imprisoned for murder, 40 women for assault and 18 for assault on a Garda; in all, 68 women were imprisoned on charges of possession, importing or supplying drugs; 58 women were imprisoned for offences against the Road Traffic Act; 16 were imprisoned for casual or illegal trading; 6 for vagrancy; and 11 for begging; 4 women were imprisoned on domestic violence charges and 4 women were imprisoned on charges of soliciting and prostitution; 2 women were imprisoned for not having a bus ticket while travelling on a bus, one woman was imprisoned for not wearing a seat belt, one woman was imprisoned for not having a TV licence, and one woman was imprisoned for failing to send a child to school. The figure below illustrates proportionately the crimes committed.



**Figure 1: Crimes with which the women were charged**

[NB this figure includes those women being held on remand i.e. not yet convicted]

(1=Fail to Appear/Breach Bail, 2=Forgery/Fraud, 3=Money Laundering, 4=Casual Trade, 5=Assault, Assault Garda, Possession of Weapon, 6=Drunk and Disorderly, Breach of Peace, Danger to Self, Soliciting/Prostitution, Failure to Produce ID, Vagrancy, Begging, 7=Possession, Importation, Supply of Drugs, 8=Larceny, Stealing, Robbery, 9=Loitering, Damage Property, Malicious Damage, 10=Alien, 11=Road Traffic Act, 12=No bus ticket, No TV license, Contempt of Court, Debt, 13=Murder, 14=Domestic Violence)

As may be seen from the figure, more women were imprisoned for larceny, robbery and stealing than for any other offence. The next most frequently occurring offences were drunk and disorderly or breach of the peace type offences. A large number of women deemed to be aliens were committed to the prison that year. It is worth noting the number of women imprisoned on assault charges, in particular the fact that one



third of them were imprisoned for assaulting a Garda. Also noteworthy is the very small number of women imprisoned for murder or domestic violence charges. Perhaps the most striking feature overall is the relatively trivial nature of the offences for which many of the women were imprisoned, either awaiting trial or having been sentenced. Table Three below provides a synopsis in percentages of women being held on remand or waiting deportation and the sentences of those women who were convicted.

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**Table Three: Remand/Deportation/Sentences**

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Remand	51%
Deportation	9%
Days plus fine	23%
One to Twelve months	14%
One year to life	3%

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(n=751)

As may be seen from the table, over half the population was held on remand in the prison, almost one quarter of the population was sentenced to days in the prison with or without fines, while 14% were sentenced to prison for periods of one to twelve months. Only 3% of the committals to the prison represented women sentenced to imprisonment for periods of one year or over. While the lengthy and complex lists of offences for which the women were committed to prison indicated substantial expressions of and engagements with criminality, further inspection of the lists and the nature of the sentences imposed on the women, evidenced the opposite. My examination established the generally trivial nature of female criminality in Ireland.

In terms of serious crimes, among the 3% of women who receive sentences of one year and over, are the foreign national women imprisoned for drug trafficking. Drug trafficking for these women is neither terribly lucrative nor terribly profitable. However among the traffickers, it is the couriers who are the most visible. Perhaps because of this visibility, their criminal activities are easily prosecuted<sup>2</sup>. Their crimes

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<sup>2</sup> International drug couriers in Ireland are currently dealt with in the courts under The Criminal Justice Act 1999, which amended the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977, legislating for a mandatory minimum prison sentence of ten years for anyone caught in

are constructed as serious<sup>3</sup>, their trials are public and visible, and their prison sentences, when they are sentenced, are long. These women are transforming the profile of the population of the Irish female prison through the perceived seriousness of their crimes and through the, consequently, significant sentences passed on them. Where most of the women tried for criminal offences in Ireland receive extremely short custodial sentences, these international women are generally sentenced to four to six years in prison. Although there is a mandatory ten-year prison sentence, (see page 197: footnote 1), the judiciary, exercising independence, rarely imposes the ten-year sentence. Relatively significant numbers of women receiving relatively long custodial sentences impact on the female prison in Ireland, on its ethos and energy, on its structures and management, and on the prison experiences provided. Significant numbers of women receiving substantial prison sentences impact on the perceived seriousness in Ireland of female criminal activity. The relatively long prison sentences imposed, beyond the impact they have on the women themselves and their families, impact on the statistical profile of women in prison in Ireland.

One of the effects of significant numbers of women receiving substantial prison sentences for crimes constructed as serious is an exaggeration in public perceptions of the nature of female criminality. As detailed in Chapter Two (page 19), criminalised and imprisoned individuals are dangerised. Dangerisation, as detailed by Douglas, and Lianos and Douglas (2000, see also Chapter Two: page 19, this work) relates to high levels of risk awareness (see Beck: 1992, see also Chapter Two: page 19, this work) and to public perceptions of danger. The discourses of the criminal justice system, in criminalizing the courier activities of the women and in criminalizing their activities in the manner that they do and to the extent that they do, feed the discourses of risk and danger associated with women prisoners in the press (see Chapter Five), and in the architectural and organisational dimensions of the women's prisons (Chapter Five). The discourses of danger fuel, and are in turn fuelled by, public perceptions of such crimes, of such criminality, and of such criminals. In reality, the women are couriers rather than traffickers. They work for the traffickers, transporting drugs for

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possession of more than 10,000 pounds, (12,700 Euro), worth of drugs for sale or supply. When this legislation was introduced, there was a degree of disquiet over the issue of judicial independence, however the judiciary has exercised independence and this independence is manifest particularly in the disparate and apparently arbitrary sentences imposed. Since mandatory sentencing was introduced, some of these women have been sentenced to ten years, some to seven years and some to four years, some were released on review and some on appeal and some are serving or have served their entire sentences.

<sup>3</sup> The Economist (2001: July 28<sup>th</sup> – August 3<sup>rd</sup>), presented the case for legalizing drugs. The case for a liberal approach rests, the suggestion is, on the fact that the 'harms' from the ban on drugs fall disproportionately on poor countries and on poor people in rich countries; it is the poor that tend to be the people involved in the drugs trade who end up in prison.

them. They are poor women and, in the world of the international trade in illegal drugs, insignificant. They are generally very foolish women, very desperate women, and or/and very young women. While they present statistically as the most criminal of the women in our prisons, in reality they are always among the prisons' the most docile characters. Within the prisons, they are further disciplined, as are all the women, through the Foucauldian panopticism of the modern prison to which they are subjected, (Chapter Two: page 41).

#### **6.1(ii) A Profile of the Women on One Day in the Dochas Centre**

I examined the records of the women imprisoned in The Dochas Centre on one day in March 2001. Where the analysis over one year established the numbers of women imprisoned annually, and it highlighted the trivial nature of the offences for which women are imprisoned, it is, in fact, a better reflection of the representation of female criminality within the criminal justice system than within the female prisons. As established, most of the 1,000 women committed annually to prison come and go from the prison, staying for very short periods of time. They make little mark on the prison and leave few traces behind them. The data collated over one day in the prison yielded a representation of the day-to-day population of the prison. This is interesting and useful because it illustrates the manner in which, day-to-day, the population of women sentenced to imprisonment manifests in the prisons.

On that day in March there were 82 women in the prison. The women were aged 18 years to 54 years, with almost 50% of the women being aged 26 years or younger; more than 75% were aged 31 or younger. Almost 50% of the women were from Dublin; five of the women had no fixed address. There were 15 non-nationals in the prison; they represented 18% of the population. Seven were from South Africa, two were from each of Jamaica, Brazil and the UK, there was one from Switzerland and one from Romania. The rest of the women, nineteen in total, were from the following Irish cities/towns or counties: there was one woman from each of Dundalk, Westmeath, Navan, Carlow, Laois, Fermanagh, Kildare, Kilkenny, Longford, Wicklow, and Waterford. There were two women each from Donegal and Limerick, and there were four women listed as being from Meath (excluding Navan). These 19 women from areas outside of Dublin accounted for 23% of the population. In

addition, there were two Traveller women, and two homeless women, who before being imprisoned had been staying in hostels for the homeless in Dublin.

The women had been imprisoned for a wide range of offences, 50 in total: larceny, robbery and stealing were prominent among the offences, as were drug-related offences. The most commonly occurring offence was possession of drugs with intent to supply. Fifteen of the women were imprisoned for that offence, among them the seven South Africans<sup>4</sup>. South African drug couriers have in recent years represented up to 25% of Ireland's imprisoned women<sup>5</sup>. Others among the women had been imprisoned for assault, for breach of the peace, and for public drunkenness. A small number of the women were imprisoned for prostitution. There was one woman, an illegal immigrant, awaiting deportation on that day. There were three women on murder charges, all serving life sentences. One woman was on a manslaughter charge. One was charged with arson. Over 85% of the women were serving sentences in excess of one year. There were fourteen women on remand. Over 75% of the population was single. In all, 84% were unemployed. One of each of the following professions was represented: machine operative, sales assistant, artist, and secretary;

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<sup>4</sup> The Mail and Guardian correspondent from Johannesburg detailed, (07/11/02) South Africa's transformation into one of the world's drug centres: South Africa is the world's biggest producer of marijuana, and it is a regional and international hub for drug trafficking.

<sup>5</sup> I presented a paper on the South African women in our prisons to a colloquium during South African Week at the Helix in DCU. Dumo Kumalo, a South African playwright and actor, a former prisoner who had been sentenced to death, was there. By the time I finished my paper he was watching me intently, I wondered what was to come. When he spoke he said: 'You know, my mother was a thief. The system (apartheid) made her so'. He went on to talk about his mother and the ways in which she cared for him and his siblings and the lengths to which she was forced to go, by the apartheid system in South Africa, to provide for her children. South Africa's apartheid legacy is the disruption of families, women's poverty, poor housing and restricted access to resources and employment. Caroline White, in her research, (1993), documented South African women's recent heritage of Pass Laws, and Group Areas Acts, legislation governing the movement and settlement of races, and its impact on women's employment. Employment, as she said, 'at the bottom of the heap, in the least secure, most tedious, and lowest paid work', (White: 1993: 150), work far removed from places of residence. White documented (1993: 151), a tradition in families of differential consumption of food and goods, a tradition of families within which women perform domestic tasks in exchange only for their keep. She describes Alexandra Township and Tembisa and Soweto, suburbs or satellite towns of Johannesburg, where households share bucket toilets, where most of the water comes from slow-running and unreliable standpipes in the streets, where there are no drains, no pavements and little electricity. She describes households where laundry is a terrible task, taking place in a bathtub over three evenings during the week. She describes a place of tight-knit communities where powerful social sanctions dictate the norms, mores and traditions of the culture. She describes a culture where women are 'strikingly house-proud' bound no doubt by the tight-knit community, and where men are prohibited, by culture and tradition, from participation in household tasks (White: 1993: 156). The women I interviewed come from a place where *lobola* or brideprice is paid, (White: 1993: 158-161), where the bridegroom pays the bride's father a consideration for the bride, formerly cattle, now cash: they come from a place where some believe men own women, because they have paid for them, and where some believe that women are more valuable and more valued, because they have been paid for. The women I interviewed come from a place where 'customary practices oppress women more than men', (White: 1993: 161). In the year 2000, South Africa's murder rate was eight times higher than that of the United States. The BBC on-line Network, (19/01/'99), claimed that Johannesburg was emerging as the rape capital of the world. In the year 2000, more than 21,000 cases of child and infant rape were reported to the police, (CNN.com: 26/11/'01). The rape of girls, especially in schools, was highlighted in The Lancet as a substantial public health problem. The largest group of perpetrators was teachers, (a Report by the Medical Research Council of South Africa, The Lancet, 2002, 359, 26 January 319-320). A UN Aids Fact Sheet (2000) established South Africa as having the largest number of people living with HIV/Aids in the world, and the fact that one in four South African women between 20 and 29 years of age are infected with the virus. An Associated Press on-line news article (Nessman; 2002) said that AIDS is the main killer of South African women, that South African women are more at risk than South African men of Aids and HIV infection, and that this, in part, is because of their lack of control in sexual relationships. In South Africa there is a prevailing culture of male sexual entitlement. COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions said in September 2002 that South Africa has the highest unemployment of any middle-income country. The official figure is 30% but unofficially it is believed to be much higher.

there was one self-employed woman. Two of the women said that they were homemakers. In terms of education, four of the women had Group Certificates, 15 had Junior Certificates, one had Leaving Certificate, and one had been to third level education. Three of the women were illiterate, one could only write a little, and one was semi-literate.

This analysis highlighted two main subdivisions, a binary, in the female prison population. This binary was seen in Chapter Five (page 182), to result in the Dochas Centre in some of the women being designated 'trustees' by prison management. The process of designating some women prisoner's trustees, was seen to result in the 'othering' of the rest of the population. Through the othering process, the othered women were seen to be further dangerised (Douglas (1992), and Lianos and Douglas (2000), see also this work, Chapter Two: page 19). The binary, as it that emerged from this analysis, was that of addicted and non-addicted women. The addicted women came generally from Dublin's inner city. They tended to be chronically addicted, young and unemployed. The non-addicted women were Irish and non-national. They tended to be mature, reasonably healthy, reasonably well educated, and relatively well resourced.

### **6.1(iii) The Women Interviewed**

This third profile is of the women interviewed for this research. In total 83 women were interviewed, 72 in the Dochas Centre and 11 in Limerick Prison<sup>6</sup>. This sample was established (Chapter Three: page 75) as being representative of the women currently imprisoned in Ireland. The women were Irish and non-nationals. The youngest was 17 years old; the oldest was fifty-three years of age. In line with the other analyses conducted on the population the women interviewed fell, broadly speaking, into two subgroups, addicted women and non-addicted women; in the terms of Dochas Centre Management, as detailed above, 'trustees' and others. As detailed above, those 'othered', become 'other' than trustee, less than them somehow. In general, trustees are non-addicted women. So the appellation serves to delineate and formalise the main cultural division in the female prison population. The divide

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<sup>6</sup> Three of the women did not complete interviews. The three women were in the Dochas Centre. They were aged 19, 24, and 29. One was on remand for shoplifting, one had been sentenced to six months for shoplifting and one was serving a seven-month sentence for selling fireworks. All three were mothers and all three lived with their own mothers, in the family home. One of the three had completed Junior Certificate, the only exam certification among them, and they had worked respectively as a cleaner, a hairdresser, and a waitress. This is all the data I had collected before the interviews were terminated (see Chapter Three: page 55).

between trustees and others is, in effect, the divide between trustees and addicted women.

The binary is a useful construct within which to explore the impact of the discourses of the prison on the women's senses of self. Within the Dochas Centre, it is through a presentation of self that a woman becomes and remains a trustee. The designation trustee is another gift within the remit of prison management. This gift is, within Douglas's concept of the gift (1992, see also this work, Chapter Five: 161), not a free gift, but a gift that engages the women in permanent commitments articulating the ideologies of the dominant institutions, for these women, the women's prisons of a patriarchal society (see Chapter Five). Trustees enjoy more freedom in the prison; they are less subject to surveillance and less liable to punishment. The capacity to produce a performance capable of securing the designation of trustee is substantial. Such a performance is related to prison management notions of civility and incivility. It exemplifies Bourdieu's (1984), concept of cultural capital, (see also this work, Chapter Two: page 26), the ability to engage in valued forms of cultural activity, upon which is based in part, he wrote, the power of the bourgeoisie. Bourdieu details (1991: 123), as outward signs expressing social position, clothes, bodily as well as linguistic language, manners, ways of speaking, accents, postures, ways of walking and standing, table manners and taste. As outlined in Chapter Two this work (page 24), Elias's (2000 Ed.), analysis of notions of civility and incivility, the civilised and the uncivilised, illuminates the manner in which a class-based criminal justice system can facilitate the punishment and exclusion of particular groups and individuals. Carlen (1988, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 25), describes the more extreme experiences of imprisonment of poorer offenders suggesting that in prison, such individuals are likely to be labelled difficult, and so subjected to more intense surveillance and correction than offenders from other classes.

**'Trustees':** Within my sample of 70 completed interviews in the Dochas Centre, there were 21 trustees, 30% of the population. There were also three women from Limerick Prison, 33% of that population, who might have been described as trustees, if that term was used in that prison. Of this population of 24 trustees, eight were Irish and sixteen were non-nationals. They ranged in age from 23 to 53 years. In general non-addicted women serve the longest sentences, and the longest sentence among

these women was life, the shortest was eighteen months. The three women were serving life sentences for murder were Irish, there was one was serving a seven-year sentence for fraud, one a three-year sentence for dangerous driving causing death, one a two-year sentence for fraud and dangerous driving. One of the women, a Traveller woman, was effectively serving life through instalments. Carey wrote of what penal historian Sean McConville described as 'life by instalments', (Carey: 2000: 138), by way of highlighting the 'little and often' syndrome of female imprisonment in Ireland. This woman had '70 or 80 convictions for larceny, mostly hotel and post office robberies'. One woman was serving 18 months for possession of cannabis with intent to supply.

The sixteen non-nationals were mostly South Africans, ten women; there were six black women among them. There were two Brazilians, two Britons, one German and one Jamaican. All but two were serving sentences for drug trafficking. Of the two, one was serving five years for money laundering, and one was on remand facing charges of credit card fraud. The fourteen drug traffickers were serving substantial sentences of three to seven years. The South African women I interviewed were from the cities of Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. They were convicted of bringing cannabis into Ireland. The one woman from Swaziland, the two Brazilians and the Jamaican woman I interviewed were all convicted of bringing in cocaine. The Briton was convicted of bringing in ecstasy. Four of the trustees acknowledged previous prison sentences. The woman on remand for credit card fraud had previously served 33 sentences in the UK, 'all for the same thing'; the Briton charged with drug trafficking, 'about 30, mostly for petty things, some for prostitution, one six-year sentence in Holland for importing cocaine from South America'; the Traveller woman had had, as stated earlier, very many previous convictions, and the woman serving a two-year sentence for fraud and drunken driving, had had 26 previous convictions, 'all for the same thing'. All of the other trustees were serving their first prison sentences.

These women were aged between 23 and 53 years, the average age being 34 years. They were predominantly single women, either widowed or separated or unmarried and unpartnered, with one to four young children to support, three of the women were

childless; one of the South African women was pregnant during her stay in the prison, she was deported before the birth of her baby. In terms of education, seventeen of the trustees had school certificates, two had had additional management training, two had had some training as hairdressers, and the Traveller had been on a Traveller training programme. Seventeen had had jobs, in shops, hairdressing, and child minding. One had been a fitness instructor. Three had been business people, one an owner, one a Director, and one a manager. The other women had worked in shops, in factories, as street vendors, selling vegetables from home, and in the sex trade. One of the women was an artist, and was so described in the media in Ireland, but this woman had never painted for a living. She featured several times in the press while serving her sentence. She was more usually represented there as a drug mule, and as one of Catherine Nevin's 'prison pals' (Chapter Five: page 150).

Although non-addicted, the Briton on the fraud charge had a drug habit, as had one of the white South Africans. One of the Irish women serving a life sentence had only ever used drugs, cannabis and cocaine, in prison. Her life sentence had been imposed on her at 16 years of age; she was 25 years old at the time of interview. The Traveller, who didn't drink alcohol, had started using drugs in prison, cannabis, ecstasy, crack, speed and cocaine. 'I started in the old prison, I got off it as soon as I came down here', to the Dochas Centre. The woman serving the two-year sentence for fraud and drunken driving was a binge drinker, 'not at home or during the day, I'd go out with someone and go on somewhere else on my own, twice a week, serious drinking'. The woman serving the eighteen-month sentence for the cannabis charge used drugs recreationally, ecstasy, coke, speed, acid, magic mushrooms, 'just the odd weekend...never a case of needing to have it'. Apart from these women, none of the trustees used drugs or alcohol to any significant extent. I interviewed five young non-addicted Irish women, aged 18 to 33 years, who were not addicts and who would not have been designated trustees. Their status as other than trustees would have related, in the case of two eighteen year olds in Limerick Prison serving sentences of 20 months and four years respectively, to their youth, independence and assertiveness; and in the case of the other three, a twenty-year-old, a twenty-two year old, and the thirty-three year old, to the fact that they were all recently arrived in prison and were there on remand.

The eight Irish women among the trustees had stable homes and family backgrounds.



All but one of the women had established their own homes separate from their family homes. The one exception was the twenty-five year old in Mountjoy Prison on a life sentence since she was sixteen. They were all embedded in their families and the four mothers among them, among whom there were two mothers of adopted children, were central to their families. Members of their families visited them regularly and the women spent a great deal of their time in prison planning and preparing for these visits. The South African women were struggling to hold on to their homes. They were trying to pay South African bills from an Irish prison, rent and utilities and school fees. They got some help with this from the Sisters of Mercy prison visitors. Of the ten white non-nationals, all had established homes of their own; seven were mothers, two of them grandmothers.

**Addicted Women:** The rest of the women, 51 women, (64% of the interviewees), were young Irish women, except for one Briton. They were, all of them, either serious drinkers or alcoholics and/or drug addicts. They ranged in age from 17 to 42 years, eight were teenagers, 35 were in their twenties, nine were in their thirties, and there one was one 42 year old. They had erratic, short, or no work histories. They had worked, those who had, in shops, bars and factories, as cleaners, waitresses, and hairdressers<sup>7</sup>. Twenty-two of them, 43%, had school certificates and one had had one year of college. Some of them, about 25%, did not construct their activities as criminal. In interview they said that they were sick or that they did stupid things, but they were not criminals. The women who did construct their activities as criminal were mostly shoplifters. They were immersed in a culture of shoplifting, many of them shoplifting to feed chronic drug habits. One described this culture as follows:

**'the girls are kind of in a gang, for shoplifting, and I'm classed as being in the gang with them. There's no leader and it's up to yourself whether you want to go or not. There are no fellas just the girls. They hang out together and that's what they do, shoplift, they make big money'.**

(Rose)

Another said:

**'I'd shoplift for my regular customers. They'd buy made-to-order from me. They'd tell me what they want and I get it for them. I'd get one-third of the shop price. One of my regular customers was going to the Galway races and she asked me to get her the oddest looking hat I could find. I**

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<sup>7</sup> The Central Statistics Office in Ireland categorised social class and occupation on a scale of 1 to 7. Using this scale, the three businesswomen in the prison would have scored two; one of the women was a qualified hairdresser and would have scored 4 on the scale. Three other women had some hairdressing experience; these three women with the rest of the women who had work experience would have scored 5 on the scale. The majority of the women worked in the black economy or they had no work histories.

**got a hundred and fifty quid for that. I was very professional, a real junkie, jeans and runners, I'd organise transport and fleece one town after another. Your face gets known and you have to move on. I'd wear different wigs and disguise myself. I was making ridiculous money. I spent it all on heroin. It would have killed me to spend it on anything else'.**

(Jackie)

The addicted women were generally serving relatively short sentences. Among the teenagers, the longest sentence was a seven-month sentence for assault on a Garda; this girl had four previous convictions for shoplifting, for being drunk and disorderly and for assault. The longest sentence among the women in their twenties was four years for assault. Two of the women in their twenties were serving three years, one for mugging and shoplifting, and one for a syringe robbery. One was serving two and a half years for drug trafficking, four were serving two-year sentences for pick-pocketing and shoplifting, thirteen were serving sentences of three to eighteen months for shoplifting, fraud, robbery, burglary and larceny. Fourteen were on remand facing charges of assault, fraud, possession of heroin with intent to supply, shoplifting, robbery, 'cheeking a copper', assaulting a Garda while intoxicated, having false tax on a car, and missing a probation appointment. Of the nine women in their thirties, three were on remand, one for breaching the peace and two for shoplifting. One had 'stolen 40 fags from a shop in Ennis...I had a few drinks taken'. Of the sentenced women, one was on a thirty-month sentence for shoplifting, and one a ten-month sentence for assault and for being drunk and disorderly. Two were on two-month and three-month sentences respectively for assaulting members of the Garda, and one was on a one-week sentence for abusive behaviour and for being drunk and disorderly. The 42 year old was on remand charged with being intoxicated and a danger to self. She is a well-known character around town in Dublin; homeless, she begs for her money, 'tapping' she calls it, she says it's an honest living. She said that she had been 'in and out over the years for drink, and once for shoplifting, a couple of dopey teddy bears'.

Of the teenagers, one 19 year old said that she used every drug, sleepers, hash, ecstasy, magic mushrooms, gear, coke, speed, acid, as well as drinking seven or eight pints of Budweiser once a week. One 17 year old said that she had started drinking the 'odd one' at 11 years of age and was 'drinking properly' by the time she was 15 years of age. Of the 34 women in their twenties, 32 were drug addicts and two were alcoholics. One was the Briton, charged with intoxication and assaulting a Garda, she

had a serious alcohol addiction and was living on the streets in Dublin. One of the alcoholics said that she would drink '12 bottles of beer every night', another 'three bottles of cherry wine and 12 cans of beer every night and every morning'. The drug-addicted women used everything. They described to me how they swallowed, smoked, snorted and injected drugs of every description. They sniffed aerosols, glue and paint. They drank bottles of Benelin. They took Valium, cannabis, magic mushrooms, acid, speed, cocaine and methadone. They took ecstasy to get high, and heroin to come down. One woman said that she would take 'really any sort of tablet' and would smoke heroin three or four times a day. She started taking cannabis at 13 years of age, 'there used to be an older gang sitting on the corner drinking and occasionally they'd smoke cannabis and I'd take a drag'. She started taking ecstasy at fourteen at discos, and acid for the first time when she was fifteen, at her first rave. She regularly injected heroin and coke, 'to be one of the gang'. She said:

**'When you're on drugs, that's your first priority, your money for drugs. Style or getting your hair done wouldn't rate at all. I need drugs to feel normal. I'd feel sick if I didn't have my drugs. The buzz from heroin makes me feel confident. I can express myself more. It's relaxing as well. It's just like all your worries are lifted. It's just great like, and the E, Jesus, I love taking ecstasy, I do, I just love it. I'm confident, I love everybody, nobody can do no wrong. I would never dance without E; I'd just sit and watch. I'd be worrying about who was watching me'.  
(Linda)**

Of the nine women in their thirties, two were binge drinkers, two were alcoholics, four were chronic drug addicts, and one was chronically addicted to both drugs and alcohol. One woman drank vodka, 'three bottles a day, I'd always make sure I had it', another, three bottles of wine and ten cans a day. The 42 year old said that, with her boyfriend, she drinks 'maybe three bottles of vodka and a few cans of cider everyday'.

The women said that they started using drugs for many reasons: because they were curious, because they were trying to loose weight, because their friends were using drugs, because members of their families were using drugs, because they were selling drugs, because they were with a clubbing crowd, going to parties going to raves, because they were trying to escape something, trying to block something out. They said that they continued to use drugs because they liked the buzz, because they wanted to be one of the gang, because they became really badly strung out on them,

(addicted to them). They said that they enjoyed it, that they couldn't stop, that they were better with it. They were relaxed and could sleep, they weren't worried, they weren't, as some of them said, thinking madly. They said it made everything go away. It made them forget about things, just forget about everything. They were in a different world.

When the addicted women talked of home they generally talked of the family home, the home of their families of origin. Few of them had established homes of their own. Four of the five non-addicted non-trustees lived in their parents' homes; one lived alone in a flat. Five of the eight teenagers lived in the family home, two were homeless and one had lived on the streets from 14 years of age but was at the time of interview back living with her mum. One twenty-four year old described how she became homeless:

**'I had my own place and I was able to take care of my son. Then I got bad on the heroin. I wasn't cooking proper dinners. Then he started missing days at school and I wasn't doing his homework with him. I didn't want him to be a victim of me, so I gave him up to be fostered. It was horrible. Then I was found with drugs in my flat. It was a corporation flat and they made me give it up. Then I was homeless'.**

(Lorraine)

Of the 32 women in their twenties, eight were homeless while 24 still lived in the family home. Three had established their own homes, one of these was married, the other two lived in bedsits, one in Galway, one in Dublin. It seems likely that these women, as well as experiencing a class-based criminal justice system, also endured a class-based experience of patriarchy (see Mahon: 1994), effected in part in their lives through the close connections they have with their family homes, their families of origin. The homes the women live in are in many cases more traditional, two and three generational homes. Within them the women live the lives of the previous generation or generations. So the habitus of the women's homes is that of previous generations. According to Inglis (1998), the habitus of the previous generation and the generation before was profoundly Catholic. Within that habitus the ideal of Irish womanhood was represented in motherhood, home and family. Poorer women, within such social structures, are much more subject to the patriarchy of our society, and they are much more controlled by it. Mahon (194: see also Chapter Two: page 25) in her study of private patriarchy concluded that women in Ireland, through educational achievement and access to middle class jobs, were making significant gains. She

acknowledged that such gains had resulted in 'a certain polarisation' between women in terms of class and income. There persisted in Ireland, she wrote, a class-based private patriarchy.

All but one of the eight addicted women over 30 years of age was homeless; the one was a Traveller women living in a trailer in Ennis. As stated earlier, the 42 year old was homeless. In all, 18 women, 35% of those chronically addicted, said that they were homeless. It is likely that some or many of the rest of these women were also homeless or experienced homelessness from time to time. One of the women, a 22 year old on remand for shoplifting, talked as follows about her experience of homelessness. She said:

**'I grew up in a hostel. We all lived there, the whole family. We used to live in a flat in Ballymun. It was a three bed roomed flat. We all lived there, me Ma, me three brothers, me two sisters, and me. I used to feel horrible. Me Ma used to get battered by me step-Da. One day we all left, because it was his flat, and we went to live in the hostel. I left the hostel when I was eighteen years old. I went to the UK. Me Ma is still there.'**

(Jacinta)

The three profiles presented above detail women's engagement with criminality in Ireland. The data establishes that that engagement is now, as it was historically, primarily related to addiction. Almost two thirds of the women interviewed were chronic addicts. Of the other one third of the population, 24 women in all, 15 had been imprisoned for drug related offences. One was an Irish woman serving 18 months for possession of cannabis with intent to supply. The other fourteen were non-nationals serving sentences for drug trafficking. The impact of globalisation on the population of the women's prison is manifest in the international makeup of the population; a consequence of the global trade in illegal drugs. As detailed in Chapter Four (page 131), the drugs problem really developed in Dublin in the 1980's, and as it did, the female prison population began to expand. From a daily average in 1974 of 24 women (Chapter Four: page 117), the population has grown to the current daily average of 100 women.

Most of the 100 women are imprisoned for engaging in petty crimes to feed addictions; or, for being deemed public nuisances, through their addictions. The majority of the rest of the women are imprisoned for dealing or importing drugs. The substantially petty nature of much of the offending of the chronically addicted women indicates that the women use the prisons now, as shelters, as they did in the 1800's

(Chapter Four: page 121). These women tend to be, to use Foucault's phrase (1974b, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 16), women on the fringe of the lower class which is constantly in contact with the police and law. As Carlen wrote (1988, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 25), since the 1800's, prisons have been used to disproportionately discipline the socially disadvantaged. Many Irish theorists, O'Mahony (2000), Bacik and O'Connell (1998), O'Donnell and O'Sullivan (2001), and McCullagh (1995) (see also this work, Chapter Two: page 24), have found that Irish prison populations are, by and large, characterised by poverty and multiple disadvantage. Specifically in relation to women prisoners, this has been established in the studies of Carmody and McEvoy (1996), and Monaghan (1989) (see also this work, Chapter Two: pages 26 and 27), both of which found women in prison to be overwhelmingly from lower socio-economic backgrounds with substantial healthcare and addiction problems.

## **6.2 Prison Experiences**

The women experience the prisons, materially, in the manner in which the prisons were presented and detailed in the previous chapter. The gazes of the prisons are those of the State, the judiciary, the media, the Prison Service, and those of the structures of the women's prisons. Within the prisons the women are subject positioned within powerful reiterative penal and patriarchal ideologies within which are ascribed to them stigmatised and dangerised identities. In the following pages, I begin my examination of that space as the women themselves experience it. Other studies of women's experiences of prison, among them Giallombardo (1966), Carlen (1983), Watterson (1996 Ed.), and McCann James (2001), describe in detail women prisoners' social roles, the social organisation within prison, and the experiences and conditions of the prisons. I will, in the following section, within and through my focus on the women's experiences of penal gazes, attempt also a description of the women's roles and social organisation within their experiences of imprisonment and the condition of their imprisonment.

The women described the manner in which, in Lefebvre's terms (1991 Ed., see also this work, Chapter Two: page 40) the prisons' discourses did speak to them. They

experienced the prisons, in Irigaray's terms (1993, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 39), as containers or envelopes of identity. As detailed in the preceding Chapter, the two women's prisons in physical design, architecturally, provided very different experiences of imprisonment for women. Yet, within both prisons, as evidenced by the women, all of the women understood themselves to be subject positioned within discourses of risk and danger. The women of both prisons described similar feelings of control in terms of the regimes of the prisons and their day-to-day experiences within them. The signs in both prisons were the closed, confined, locked and guarded spaces, the symbols of militaristic discipline, and the degradation rituals. The discourses of the prisons spoke to the women through the signifying capacity of the physical conditions of the spaces within which the women were imprisoned. While the physical conditions in the Dochas Centre were vastly superior to the physical conditions in Limerick Prison, the culture of control, the restrictions on space and on movement in space, the experiences of being managed by a quasi-militaristic regime, were similar for women in both institutions. The discourses communicated with the women through the discipline regimes of the spaces, through the constant control, the recalcitrant technologies, the infantilising punishments, through the endless waiting, for movement, for permissions, for things, and through the engagement in the organised activities into which the women were encouraged, and ultimately coerced. In terms of semiology, these experiences were the women's denotative experiences of those spaces. Connotatively, these experiences signified for the women their prisoner status, their degraded stigmatised identities. At this level of signification, these experiences communicated to the women, very clearly, and in every moment of every day, their spoiled identities, their deviant subject positioning within the discourses of the prisons.

### **6.2 (i) Experiences of Control**

The women detailed the manner in which in their every-moment-of-every-day experiences within prison they were controlled. They said that they were, everywhere and in every way, controlled and very obviously controlled. They were, in fact, they said, rendered helpless by the level of control imposed upon them, and by the subsequent degree of passivity enforced on them. Anne<sup>8</sup> said:

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<sup>8</sup> To protect the women's anonymity pseudonyms are used throughout.

**'You are completely helpless. You lose all your power. You can do nothing. You can arrange nothing. You can't make a phone call. You can do nothing on your own. I don't want to hear about the problems on the outside, because while I'm in here I can do nothing to help'.**

Bernie spoke of the experience of being so controlled and of how that subjection to control, manifested itself in the relationships in the prison. Through her description of that control, the power differential between the women prisoners and the staff of the prisons was illustrated; as was the disciplined ways of being of the imprisoned women. She said:

**'You are not in control of yourself at all, it's all yes sir, no sir, do what they tell you to do. You just have to do what they want; otherwise you're just making life hard for yourself. I get on with the officers. I keep myself to myself. I don't cause trouble. I'm not a cheeky person, I don't answer back, you know. Just tell me to do something, I do it.**

(Bernie)

The women said that they themselves had no control over anything. Not only that, they said that everything was out of their control. The women experienced the controlling structure and design of the prisons, the prison regimes, and the management and staff of the prisons, as denials of their adulthood. As Carlen wrote (1985, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 33) the constitution of women within and without adulthood in Lombroso and Ferrero's theory of female penology persists among prison administrators. Carol said:

**'I'm treated like a two-year-old all the time. I know very well that my intelligence matches theirs. I know that I can look them in the eye and match them word for word but sometimes the words don't come, because I'm undermined somehow, so I get tongue-tied and I never know if I'm saying the right thing or the wrong thing. If I was on the outside and I met them it would be totally different.'**

For the women, the daily routine in the prisons is structured through queuing, crowding and waiting. The women spoke of the waiting, the waiting for everything, waiting to go to school, waiting to go to lunch, waiting for phone calls, waiting for lock-up, waiting for a smoke. Deirdre talked about shop orders, the mechanism through which prisoners may buy the goods on sale in the prison, cigarettes, soft drinks, sweets and so on. She said:

**'You have to wait to make a shop order, then wait for it to be delivered. Then you wait for the shop to open so that you can go and pick it up. Then when you go to pick it up, there may be too many people there, queuing for shop orders. Then the officers will chase you away, tell you to wait and come back when things are quieter. When you come back the shop may be closed. Then**



**you have to wait for it to open again. You know you will get your shop order, you just don't know when. That's what it's like here, waiting for this, waiting for that, it's always waiting. When I'm waiting for things, I just have to pretend to myself that it doesn't matter, and just wait and wait and wait.'**

This experience of waiting is the women's every-moment-of-every-day experience of the prison. As is the experience of being 'chased around' or 'run around' the small enclosed guarded space that is the prisons by uniformed officers and staff. These experiences are fundamental and reiterative elements of the experiences of penal control to which the women are subjected. They are aspects of, to adapt Lefebvre's term (1991 Ed., see also this work, Chapter Three: page 61), the petty terrorism of every day life in that space. Elena said:

**'Here people sometimes can make me angry. For instance the officers, you should hear the way they talk to us. One day I heard one say 'oh, lets give the monkeys their medication, it will keep them quiet'. I told the nurse I had my period three times this month. She replied, 'oh, lucky you'. My skin was dry and I said it itched and I couldn't sleep at night. She said 'take less showers'.**

The women are subject to these linguistic discourses as they are to the prisons' material discourses.

## **6.2 (ii) Prison Structures**

As detailed in Chapter Five, with the progressive atmospheres of the new prison, new structures have been instigated in the Dochas Centre: among them the civilian dress of the discipline staff; and in the 'family or home-like' structure of the prison. There are no such new structures in Limerick Prison. The women in the Dochas Centre described better relationships with the prison officers than the women in Limerick Prison. This is related to the changes detailed above and to the relative greater autonomy of the women in that prison. In the Dochas Centre, the women are more independent of the officers, they have more options in terms of how they spend their time, and they have more control over those options. As detailed in Chapter Five (page 171), the regime in Limerick Prison is a lock-up regime. Frances detailed that experience as follows:

**'They open the door at 9am. You have to be up and dressed with your shower and your room clean and gone to the yard at 10am. They lock the door to your cell behind you. If you stay in your cell you are not let out again until dinnertime, (12.30pm). If you are out you are not allowed back in until dinnertime. You eat your dinner locked in your cell. Then the same thing happens again at 2pm, again locked up at 4.30, and again unlock at 5.30. Then lock up for the evening at 7.15 or 7.30pm. If we go to the toilet at night they lock the door behind us and we have to wait on the corridor for maybe half an hour, until they think they are ready to open our door for us.**

**Then they lock us in again'.**

The women in Limerick Prison expressed the dependency of the women there on the officers, the relative powerlessness the women felt, and their resulting frustration. Geraldine said:

**'The worst thing about the prison is not being able to do things for yourself. When you ask for the post they tell you it's not there. They tell you they've made a phone call when they haven't. We don't matter to them I suppose, so it doesn't matter whether or not I've spoken to my Mam and Dad. I don't even want to think about it'.**

Of her relationship with prison staff, Hilary said:

**'I try to manage them now. I negotiate with them. When I was younger I used to think that I could take them on. I used to try and I'd get killed. Jesus, they would kill me, corner me, throw me down, strip me, and lock me in a punishment cell. They'd leave me there until the Governor came to talk to me. He would ask me how I felt and decide whether or not I could be allowed out. I was held there once for four days. You feel stupid when you're in it. You feel totally in the wrong. You feel alone and upset, more ashamed than anything.'**

In the prison system, formal punishment involves a prisoner being put 'on report': almost 40% of the women I interviewed had been on report at some stage and some of them had been on report 'loads of times'. Imprisoned women are placed on report, punished formally within the penal system for breach of prison discipline. Generally the women are reported for punishment for any show of disrespect towards an officer of the prison, the authority of the prison. They are reported for shouting at an officer, for being cheeky with an officer, for swearing at an officer, or for fighting, with officers or with other prisoners. In keeping with the patriarchal order of the prisons, they are punished for such minor breaches of discipline as recalcitrant children might be punished. They are scolded or told off and/or sent to their rooms. In Chapter Four (page 104), I detailed how in 1851, the Inspectors General of Irish Prisons argued that, contrary to prevailing societal constructions and representations of female criminality, female criminality was attributable 'in great measure' to the women's experiences of extreme poverty. They said that, within prison, women did not engage in serious breaches of discipline, their breaches were generally of a trivial nature, refusing to work, bursts of passion, and communicating with each other. As it was then, so it is now.

The women said that the Dochas Centre is structured around constantly changing

petty rules and regulations; they said that one of the biggest issues for the women was the fact that there were no written rules, no set of rules on the back of the door, no do's and don'ts. The women spoke of the activities in that prison, (see Chapter Five: page 166: footnote 6). Imelda said:

**'You always have to be doing something. If you're not doing something they want to know why you're not doing something. The whole place reminds me of boarding school. I know that I can pick up brownie points by going to school. They love that, when you go to school. So I go and I pick up my brownie points even though the whole school bit drives me bonkers.'**

Bacik (2002: 146), highlights Walklate's comment that the concessions offered to women prisoners in comparison to men can create an imagery of women's prisons as boarding schools. Walklate cited evidence from studies which established in fact, the brutalising nature of women's imprisonment experiences.

The main issue for the women in Limerick Women's Prison was the space that is that prison and the condition of their accommodation. The women felt very trapped, and very confined in that small space. They described the prison as 'desperate' as 'too small', 'a matchbox', 'tiny, you couldn't swing a cat'. They said that they had 'no space at all and no air at all'. There was they said 'no place to go and nothing to do'. Janet said:

**'There is no chance at all for exercise, only in the gym. You can't walk, not even up and down stairs. You can ask to be allowed out into the yard when you are unlocked, but there's nothing out there. There is nothing to do. There isn't even a bench to sit on'.**

Kay said that in the small space that is Limerick Women's Prison, there would be: 'about 20 girls, always fighting,...and only two shower rooms, three toilets and a small washing machine'. Linda said that this place, the 'new' women's wing in Limerick Prison was better than the old place, the old female wing in Limerick Prison were they women had been held until 2001. Linda was discussing the interim move, the women had not at this time moved into the accommodation they currently inhabit. She described how tiny the old wing had been, a tiny wing with tiny cells, she said:

**'At least here you have glass in the windows. You didn't over there. We used toilet rolls....full rolls... You stick them in this way into the window, length ways. Two would fill each space where the glass should be. Two rows of ten rolls of toilet paper where the glass should be, keeping the wind out. Then take two down if you needed a little air. Take them all down in the summer time'.**  
(Linda)

In the Dochas Centre, almost 30% of the women expressed the isolation they felt in the new prison, living in different houses in two separate yards. They had been used to the closeness of the old women's prison at Mountjoy or the closeness of their accommodation at home or on the outside. Many of the women came from the flats complexes of Dublin inner city, from Traveller trailers, from homeless shelters, and from skips (sleeping rough). Marion said:

**'I get lonely in here. I miss me family being around me and talking to me all the time. At home I sleep in with me sister. I think it's the same for everyone here. I know the girls on drugs are sleeping their time away, but it is the same for everyone, we're all locked up. But I suppose for Travellers, we're usually very close physically to each other'.**

Ten of the women felt that the structures of the new prison divided the women, that somehow the women had been more united in the old prison. They felt that the new prison was stricter more controlled. Nikki said:

**'It's not like old Mountjoy. It's different here', (in the Dochas Centre). 'The door into the prison works on electric, and the door into my room is a wooden door. But it's still the same really. I mean they're still going to close the door in on me 'till I'm due me time out. I mean the key' (the keys the women have to their rooms) 'is fuck all, it doesn't mean anything'.**

Only fifteen of the women interviewed had ever heard of the Visiting Committee, the only structure within the prison system through which the women can get a hearing that is not of the control or management structure of the prison. Members of the Visiting Committee at Mountjoy Prison told me, in the group interview held with them, (see Chapter Three: page 70), that they believed the new female prison to be a holiday camp.



**Photograph Ten: The Big Yard in The Dochas Centre: 2002**

They said that the two open yards in the prison, with their flowerbeds and shrubs and the few benches arranged around them, made the prison look like a holiday camp. They suggested that the holiday camp experience of the prison was also evident in the relative freedom the women enjoyed within that prison

### **6.2 (iii) Prison Discipline**

The holiday camp representation of the Dochas Centre is difficult to sustain in light of a consideration of prison discipline. Prison discipline manifests itself in various signs, symbols and rituals within the prison. Among these are the lock ups and the lock backs; the obsequies; the queuing; the rigid hierarchies; the punishments, formal and infantilising; the telling-offs; the scoldings; the degradations; the stripping; the searching; the surveillance; the random drug tests; the strip rooms and pads; and in the prison transfers, from the Dochas Centre to Limerick Prison<sup>9</sup> and from either of these to Dundrum, the Central Mental Hospital, (CMH), the State's only forensic psychiatric facility, (see Chapter Five: page 176: footnote 11). All imprisoned women are subject to the discipline of the prisons. All of the women live with the threat of being stripped, of being restrained, of being locked into a padded cell, of being transferred to the Central Mental Hospital.

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<sup>9</sup> Fifteen of the women interviewed said that they had been threatened with being sent to Limerick Prison as a punishment.

The women described the process of becoming a prisoner as a very short, very sharp degrading process. As detailed in Chapter Five (page 150), the process is a ritualistic degradation ceremony through which the individual becomes 'reconstituted' (Chapter Two: page 23). The individual identity is removed, prisoner identity ascribed, and a female prisoner is brought into being. Phil said:

**'They take everything that's yours from you. Then you're left in a holding cell with nothing but a concrete slab that looks like a bed. There's graffiti all over the walls and you can see pain everywhere'.**

Rita said:

**'As soon as you come through the gate that's when you realise...words like prisoner, offender and incarcerated, bounce off your head. Words you thought you'd never in your life hear. Those are the words the officers use'.**

The women discussed the strip-searching that is always an element of the process. They agreed that all are subject to it, all of the time, regardless of their physical or psychological state of being, their age, their culture, their status, remand or sentenced, their criminal status or their drug habits. Susan said:

**'Yes, I was strip-searched coming in. Oh, I was so shocked. It was my first time to be in a position like that. I really didn't know that, that you can be naked in front of the people. I really didn't know. Every time now when I go to court, they say I must lift my bra up and you have to take down your underpants. I don't feel good every time, I don't feel good. I feel bad and disgraced. Every time I go to court.'**

Teresa described the experience as follows. Her description, as the description above, is of an experience far removed from the professional descriptions of strip-searching detailed in Chapter Five, (see page 171):

**'It's an awful invasion of your body. You pull your knickers down and then they tell you to jump in case you've something inside you. You shower in front of them, they check your ears, your nostrils, between your toes. It's awful. All these women around you searching you, checking your hair. It's like you don't belong to yourself anymore'.**

Una said that she had psoriasis all over her body and she felt very embarrassed striping off in front of the officers. Valerie said that when she had a period they wanted her to show them the sanitary towel. Alice said: 'I've been strip searched about 25 times. It's horrible and degrading and I do mind. I wouldn't tell anyone

about it, not my family, no one. We're ashamed of it. It's degrading'. Some of the woman had been strip-searched hundreds of times. Evidencing the different control, discipline and punishment experiences of the addicted women, the women said that 'when a woman is into drugs they really go to town on her'. They said that it's part of it. Cara said:

**'Coming into prison this time was horrible, I was dying sick. I didn't have me medication. After being in the police station all night you're dirty. They strip-searched me. This time I wouldn't strip for them so they pinned me to the ground and took all my clothes off. They must have strip-searched me 200 times.'**

The women said that male officers were never involved in this searching, however one woman did say that: 'in the old place, if a riot broke out, the men might be involved'. She said: 'they'd just strip you and give you a hiding and that would be it'.

All of the women are subject to prison discipline, to surveillance, to control, and to punishment, but the experience is more intense for some women. Ellen said: 'the officers only look at the cameras when there is a problem, nobody is watching us, that's a dead cert, unless they thought you were dangerous'. Gina said:

**'They know everything. They know when I wake up, they know when I leave my room, they know when I have shower. Anytime the Governor wants to search my room I have to allow it. Every week I have a urine test and a nurse stands in front of me and watches me pee. I have no privacy'**.

The black South African women were the most docile of all the docile bodies in the prisons (see page 162). Sara said:

**'Yes I am being watched, but it doesn't bother me. And yes I am being controlled in ways, but it doesn't bother me because, I know why I am here, I have committed a crime and so I have to be here, to be punished'**.



**Photograph Eleven: Double Cell Limerick Prison (New Accommodation) 2002**

The surveillance technologies: the small shared accommodation, the blue light, the lock on the door which only locks from the outside, and the peephole on the door, are clearly visible. Also evident, lower left of the photograph, is the stainless steel shield for the toilet.

The lights in the prison are part of the control system; the women said that the lights are always on. They discussed the fact that they can't leave the door open at night because of the lights on in the corridor, and the fact that while the women may sleep in dark rooms, officers checking the sleeping women peep in at the women turning on a blue florescent light to illuminate the room. Room searches are part of the surveillance rituals of the prison. Almost 60% of the women I interviewed, most of them addicted women, said that they had had their rooms or cells searched in the prison. As Diane said: 'routine spins, (searches) for drugs or workses' (needles)'.

The padded cells were central to the disciplinary controls of the Dochas Centre, as



were the strip cells of Limerick Women's Prison. Over 40% of the women I interviewed, half of that population, had been in the pads. Many of them had been sent there for accommodation when the prison was overcrowded. Elaine said that she had spent nearly all her time in the prison asleep in the pad; she said that it was terrible:

**'In a gown, no knickers, no bra, hair all over the place and you can do nothing. It feels fucking cold; there's no heat at all in there, a mattress on the floor and padded walls. It's horrible, cold and dreary looking'.**

The women who were sent to the pads for punishment tended to be addicted women. Jackie said:

**'They treat you like a piece of dirt, food is thrown in at you, milk is put on the floor and when you're punished, the way they drag you to it. They treat you like a rag doll and start striping you off down to your jewellery. They drag you all around and put the gown on you and then they put their arms over their faces and heads and run out'.**

Karen said that a nurse would often suggest to a woman that she might like to go to the pad if she needed time alone or needed to hit something, saying that she could scream and go crazy in the pad if she wanted. Lucy had heard that sometimes women were tricked into going to it. She said: 'It's horrible, when you're there; you think you're mad'. Many women echoed this. Mary said:

**'I think they put me in the pad because they were afraid I might take my own life. The cameras were the scariest thing about it. I thought that they were probably watching me all the time. I wanted to bang on the walls and go mad, but I was afraid to, because maybe they were watching me, and they might think that I was mad and then they might want to strap me down'.**

Some of the women, evidencing Carlen's contention that the women are 'horribly at home within psychiatry' (1983, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 52), said that they would ask to go there. Three of the women spoke of using the facility of the padded cell in lieu of company, in lieu of confidantes, in lieu of support; they talked of desperately needing someone to talk to and not having anyone, and of asking to go to the pads so that they wouldn't harm themselves. Nuala said:

**'It's horrible, feels real claustrophobic, nothing in it, it's boring, you don't even know what time of day it is or anything. The gown is degrading cos you're not allowed wear any underwear but it's a good idea. It keeps you safe and it's important especially for me and for people like me. I'm suicidal from time to time and they often take me to the pad to keep me safe'.**



**Photograph Twelve: Padded Cell: The Dochas Centre**

Kate said:

**'I would ask to go to the pad. I was often depressed, the pad would depress you more, but sometimes you need someone to talk to and there's nobody to talk to and so you go to the pad so you don't harm yourself. Sometimes I cut my arms; I think I'm just trying to get the anger out of me. I was raped by my brother-in-law when I was 14 years old. I think I'm still trying to get that anger out'.**

All of the women accepted the padded cells with its referents of madness as part of their lives. They accepted the padded cells and their role in the controlling structures of the prison. They accepted the control, the degradation and the signs of insanity implicit in the padded cells as part of their world, their lives and as part of their

identities. These women were women who could and would, if they did not behave, be dragged to padded cells, stripped in padded cells, and locked into padded cells until they would behave. All of the imprisoned women were subject to these punishments and all of the women learned to live with the threat and the reality of such punishments. All of the women learned to adjust their behaviour, their senses of self, their personal identities accordingly.

There was very little evidence of resistance among the women. This, I suggest, relates to Sue Richardson's comment on her experience of imprisonment, (Chapter Four: pages 138), that resistance was always individual and likely to manifest in the form of verbal protest or self-injury. The main sites of resistance in both of the women's prisons were the peepholes on the door of the rooms or cells. Laura said:

**'I don't like when people look into holes, it bothers me. I get actually annoyed about it because I think if you want to see someone or talk to them, you open the door, look them in the eyes, and talk to them like that. I just don't like it. It's not right to look through holes at people, why not open the door and speak to them'.**

Pamela said:

**'When I want some privacy I cover the peephole with some paper. You are not allowed to do that and you would get told off for doing it. I covered the peephole one time when I was having a shower and I forgot to take the paper down when I was finished. I was told off big time for that. So now I leave the door open all the time, even when I'm in the shower. With the door closed I never know when I'm being watched and I just couldn't have that and so I leave the door open'.**

Ruth said:

**'I know the officers have to check, but it's not very nice, people peeping in at you, even peeping in at you in the middle of the night. They check around midnight and then again probably around 4am. They check twice or three times, depending on who's on'.**



**Photograph Thirteen: Two-woman cell, old accommodation, Limerick Prison (2001)**

The peephole was a big issue among the women in Limerick Prison. Where in the Dochas Centre the women would be ‘told off’, the women in Limerick Prison would lose their privileges for a week or two weeks, no shop orders, no phone calls, no visits or screened visits, and nights, locked up for the night everyday at 4.30pm.

### **6.3 Personal Identities**

In this section I examine the identities of the women as they themselves represented them. The women’s identities emerge in part from the engagement of the women with

the powerful penal discourses detailed in the previous chapter. In his investigation of power, Foucault (1977, see also this work, Chapter Two: 49), wrote of the constitution of subjectivity through power relations. As Garland wrote (1990, see also this work, Chapter Two: 22), of subjectivity as socially and culturally constructed. Bosworth's (1999, see also this work, Chapter One: 5), focus was on how women as agents negotiate power within prison, on how women negotiate the various discourses of prison and through these negotiations construct their identities. While Carlen and Worrall (2004, see also this work, Chapter One: 4), questioned the extent to which an individual is free to shape her own actions and identity independently of the circumstances in which she finds herself. I suggest that identities are progressively and dynamically achieved through discursive practices. It is through the reiterative use of signs, words and phrases, symbols, rituals and behaviours, that social reality is constructed, that roles and identities are ascribed. The prison's signifying capacity did most emphatically ascribe the identity of prisoner to all the women, and in the interviews all of the women very readily identified themselves as prisoners.

### **6.3 (i) The Sub-cultures**

There were many different groups of women among the interviewees. There were, of course, 'trustees' and others, there were Irish women and non-Irish women, there were older women and younger women, black women and white women, addicted women and non-addicted women. There were also women serving long sentences and women serving short sentences. There were Traveller women and homeless women, city women and women from towns and counties of rural Ireland. The women tended to become close to, and to stay close to, women who were similar to them, women with similar life experiences. Susan said:

**'There are very many different groups in the prisons; the different floors in Cedar house tend to stay together, the Traveller women stay together. For me it's difficult to have friends. Well, you can be close with one or two, but not in general. Because they know each other from outside and they stay with their friends.'**

The women serving long sentences, generally the 'trustees', tend to bond with each other, the better-educated women, the women with the more stable lifestyles. It is clear that the women tend to bond with women they identify with and so their friendships can be seen, as suggested by O'Connor, (1998: 127), as serving to elaborate and perpetuate the structures of their society. Terri talked of the young

addicted women who come and go from the prison. She said:

**'The women here never got a chance. They don't know right from wrong. They don't even behave in Church. They've never been taught anything. They all have sad stories. Every one of them has had a very bad experience at home, with their families. Those women are in the houses where at night they are locked in their rooms. When everything is locked up you hear them shouting to each other, screaming. If they hear bad news and they are locked up, they can set fire to their rooms or they cut themselves. It happens at night.'**

Terri described in part, the differential experiences of imprisonment in the Dochas Centre. In relation to this differential treatment, Vicky said:

**'We get searched all the time. Even after a visit we get searched. A black person wouldn't get searched. Someone doing life wouldn't get searched. They get to spend a longer time on their visits. They're all in for murder or for drug smuggling and they walk straight into a 24-hour house' (a house with no lock-up at night) 'and they get all the privileges. We're all in for petty crimes, and we're stuck in the small yard', (the most secure of the two yards in the prison) .**

This testimony evidences in part the role of the design of the prison and the prison regime in shaping prisoner culture. Vicky identifies very strongly with her group or sub-culture, the other Irish addicted women, the 'we' of her discourse. She differentiates herself and her group from the others, the 'they' of her discourse. As outlined in Chapter Two (page 19), othering and the fear of otherness have roles in the process of dangerisation. All of these elements of the prison experience play a part in the subject positioning of the women. It is through such experiences, and the reiterative nature of the experiences, that the women come to know the identities ascribed to them.

In prison some of the women develop very close bonds of friendship with other women, (see O'Connor: 1998:117-135). Paula, one of the 'trustees' remarked:

**'Women get closer together than men. Women can become deeply intimate with each other, without that intimacy being sexual. When the door to the house is locked at night we spend hours together, talking, drinking tea, in each others rooms. We are all sad in here. We spend half our time counselling each other. The love we have for each other and the intimacy we share really helps in here'.**

These close friendships sustained the women in their prison experiences and through their prison sentences. Within prison the friendships between the women are encouraged and supported. This is particularly the case of the friendships among the 'trustees'. O'Connor, (1998: 117), suggests that friendships: 'are attractive because they offer a definition of self which is under the control of the individual'. The

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friendships among the addicted women are more controlled. Stacy discussed with me the manner in which she managed her relationship with the other women. She said:

**'I try to keep to meself a good bit, cos they're always gossiping and fighting. See, a lot of bitchiness goes on, jealousy; always have to have something to say about you. What you have got and what you haven't got. You have to be careful. You can get roped into the conversation, and before you realise it you've said something you shouldn't have, and then they say it back and then you're in trouble before you know it.'**

(Stacey)

The women related to me the manner in which power is wielded among the imprisoned women. Amy discussed the manner in which she engaged with prison staff and management. She said:

**'You have to be strong that's all. You have to learn in prison to be strong. Prison can make or break you. You have to let a lot of things pass. In your mind just pretend its not happening. Just walk away. If I wanted something, I'd fight for it. Maybe I'll get it, maybe I won't. It's just up front and ask. There's a chance you might get it, but you can't work it, that's all.'**

(Amy)

Brenda said:

**'The officers can bully you and threaten you. Half of them would put you going, wind you up like, like they're the boss. I tell them they're not the boss; the Governor's the boss. And they say the Governor's not the boss, that they're the boss. And that's the end of it like. It's not fair.'**

A few women in the prison expressed different degrees of power and control. The power they discussed was a physical power, the power to intimidate other women. There was also a threat of physical violence. Catriona spoke of the old female prison at Mountjoy where she said:

**'During meal times the doors to the cells would be open and girls were going in and taking stuff from your room, you know robbin' stuff, cigarettes and stuff, and now you can lock your room and you know that nobody is in it'**

(Catriona)

The women in Limerick Prison also said that everyone is watching, Delia said:

**'The women watch as the officers watch, everyone watches: the girls watch for a chance to go into your cell and rob it and the officers are watching you to see if you are trying to rob the other girls' cells. I trust them both the same, the girls and the officers. I don't trust either of them. Sometimes you have to watch the girls alright. In case they robbed something out of your cell. They wouldn't rob my cell now cos they know I wouldn't leave them rob it. They know that if something went missing I'd search their cells until I found it.'**

Most of the young women in Limerick, because of the lock-up regime there, preferred sharing their cells. The older women said they would not survive in a shared cell. One



of the women in Limerick Prison was almost fifty years of age. She said that the other women were all in their twenties, 19, 20, or 21 years of age. She explained her isolation to me:

**'Most of the women are from inner city Dublin. Most of them are drug addicts. Some are from Cork city. There's fighting all the time between the two gangs, Cork and Dublin. Sometimes we have women here from Athlone town as well. We have faction fights. The Athlone crowd back the Cork crowd against the Dublin crowd. There's tension all the time and fist fights and head butting. I saw one girl putting her fingers up another girl's nose and she was pumping blood. She thinks she has a broken nose but I don't think it is broken. She got a kick in the head yesterday. She has a mark there and a mark on her eye. I think she got five beatings in a week and a half. She doesn't cause any hassle really but she gets on their nerves.'**

(Mary)

The aggression and violence manifest in Limerick Women's Prison is absent from the Dochas Centre. The bleaker accommodation of the women's prison in Limerick Prison provides the setting for, and probably the incentive for, physical aggression among the women imprisoned there; this aggression is absent in the Dochas Centre with its contemporary, novel and personal design, and it's relatively relaxed management.

### **6.3(ii) The Addicted Women**

About 85% of all the women interviewed smoked cigarettes, 75% drank alcohol. Over two thirds, 64%, of the women interviewed acknowledged that they were addicts. Over 60% of the women interviewed used cannabis while 45% of the women interviewed used other illegal drugs. The women used prescription drugs, among them methadone, sleeping tablets, Valium, Prozac and anti-depressants. Donna said:

**'I was twelve years old when I started using cannabis. Then I tried all the others, speed, acid E's. I only tried coke once or twice. I was tricked into taking heroin. It's five years since I stopped all that. I just use hash now. I started using it because my brother used it. I liked it. It made me feel good, it still does. It doesn't bother me, I can go without it, but nobody would stop me from using it.'**

Most of the women engaged very seriously with their addictions. Elizabeth said:

**'I tried it to see what it was like. Then I just got addicted to it. It was a weekend thing, then every day, then taking acid, heroin, ecstasy, and cocaine. I'm much more confident when I'm taking me drugs. I had some last Thursday in here. I had to smoke it. It's not the same, cos you don't get the hit straight away.'**

For these women their identities were completely immersed in their addictions.

Sabrina said:

**'I'm a smoker and a drinker, big time. Two bottles of vodka a day every day. I use prescription drugs, sleeping tablets, and phi, and Valium. I use cannabis regularly and I use cannabis in prison, just a little, a drag off the girls. I used heroin in the old prison, smoked it. I started using drugs nine years ago when I was 22 years old. I had been drinking since I was 14. The last time I snorted a bit was in the courts the day before I was brought in. I took it just to take away the pains of withdrawal. But it didn't even help that. Both alcohol and drugs ruined my life. Cocaine really fucked me up, the heroin too. I started because everyone else was, the drugs were there in front of me face all the time, the guys I was with. Then I got addicted to them. You get to like the buzz. Then you get to the stage when you're just normal on them.'**

Marie said:

**'I'm a smoker and a drinker. I drink shorts, Pernod and black. I use prescription drugs, Valium, methadone, a couple of others. I use cannabis regularly. I started using drugs when I was 15. I use everything. I started for the novelty, not through peer pressure. Then I liked it too much to stop.'**

These women were alcoholics and drug addicts, their lives were the lives of alcoholics and drug addicts, their associates were alcoholics or drug addicts or drug dealers, their routines were the routines of alcoholics or drug addicts, their habits were the habits of alcoholics and drug addicts and their concerns were the concerns of alcoholics and drug addicts. Mandy said:

**'I'm here for a week. I got nicked on Wednesday and I was brought in on Thursday, drunk and disorderly and abusive behaviour, outstanding warrants for the same thing and for not turning up. I don't shop lift or anything like that. I tap for my money. I have six or seven previous convictions for drunk and disorderly mostly, once for damage to a car. I'm homeless. I drink vodka, Cork Cream wine, and bottles or cans of cider. I drink every day. It depends on the money. I use prescription drugs. I use hash now and then. I use heroin, I inject it.'**

Alana said:

**'I came in on Thursday and I'm on remand, for failing to appear. I was shoplifting and they found an old warrant. I had two bottles of Smirnoff and I went into a shop for three cans of Fosters. The security guard said I hadn't paid for the vodka. I have about ten previous convictions, for larceny, house breaking, driving offences and soliciting. As a drug addict the prison is great for a week. When you go out you get a great hit from the heroin.'**

Katherine said:

**'I drink cider, 10 cans and wine as well. My boyfriend and I would share about three bottles between us everyday. I take Valium and I use cannabis every day. I was 14 when I started using cannabis, I started using solvents when I was younger, magic mushrooms when I was 15, LSD at 17, speed at 18, rocks, cocaine in rock form, at 21 and heroin at 23. I suppose I'm trying to escape, trying to obliterate.'**

Louise:

**'I started drinking when I was 14/15. I first used cannabis when I was 17, then ecstasy cocaine and speed at 17 or 18. I started using heroin when I was 21. A lot of the people I did drugs with over the years are dead now, dead from drugs. I didn't know when I started that it would destroy**

**me, all the robbin' I did, all me friends dying.'**

The women used drugs in prison. They get them from people visiting them in prison, from people coming into the prison on a prison sentence, or returning to prison from TR, (temporary release). Some women are bullied into bringing drugs into the prison. Some want the notoriety of bringing drugs into the prison. The dealers among the imprisoned women and among the women's associates on the outside want the profits and the dependency to be had from getting drugs in. Drugs are 'kissed over' into the prison on visits. They come in in clothes sewn into linings; people outside send drugs in in gifts. Women bring drugs into the prison in plastic bags pushed into containers of hair gel or body lotion. Most popularly they bring them in internally, 'bottled', in prison vernacular. As one woman said, 'they'd put it up in their private area'. Drugs came into prison in the women's vaginas<sup>10</sup>. This utilitarian use of and perspective on vaginas echo the women's engagements with and experiences of prostitution.

### **6.3 (iii) Sexuality**

The women discussed with me their experiences of sex and sexuality. Overall the women's narratives highlighted their understanding of heterosexuality as compulsory (see Chapter Two: page 24). All but three of the women, of the 80 interviewees who completed interviews, were heterosexual. The interviews highlighted the lack of interest in sex of many of the women. Alex said:

**'I never think about it. It's not a problem for me. To my knowledge there really isn't any sex in the prison. I'm sure nothing like that goes on here. I don't know how other people feel about it, its not discussed.'**

Maria said: 'There's no sex in here. I never actually seen gay people in the prison. Nobody ever came on to me'. Nina said: 'there's no sex, but I do sometimes do a bit of kiss-chasing in the yard'. Olivia said:

**'There was this girl yesterday; she came on to me in the yard. I thought she was buzzed (stoned). She wasn't. So I went to swing out of her. The officers stopped me. I would genuinely have punched lumps out of her.'**

Other women said things like 'sex is not really a problem' or 'no I never think about it'. Pat said 'I'm anti-sex really'. Rachel said:

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<sup>10</sup> There are no internal searches. There are random strip searches, random room searches, and random drug tests.

**'As far as I know there's no sex in here. My own sexuality doesn't bother me. I'm straight, but I never really had much sex. The first time I did, I got pregnant, so now I'm terrified. I've had sex maybe ten times, that's all'.**

Sally, who on the outside was in a long-term heterosexual relationship, said:

**'There's no sex in the prison. I don't miss sex as much as I miss just cuddling up. I miss him when I go to bed. He always cuddles up to me. I miss being near him, sitting on his knee watching TV. I don't miss sex. I miss the closeness. I miss holding him.'**

In all, eight women expressed interest in sex, three were 'trustees', mature white women, two of them grandmothers. The oldest woman among the interviewees said:

**'I miss sex. I miss men. We've got the male officers and I want to talk to them all the time, because I miss the attention of men. I think it's dreadful the way the male prison is separate from the female prison. It's so unnatural. It's terrible if you're a woman who likes to be with a man. It's terrible, so lonely'.**

The black South African women were deeply committed to their relationships with men, those in relationships, and deeply committed to the thought or the ideal of a relationship, those not in such relationships. Joy said:

**'I am married and I have one little girl and I am pregnant. When I go home my husband will be there with my little girl. He tried to stop me from coming here. He works part-time at a bank. We argued one time and I stopped telephoning him. Then he started to telephone me and since then things have been better between us.'**

Ruth said:

**'I am closest to my boyfriend, he is from Nigeria. He helps me a lot while I am here. He helps my baby and he helps my Mum. She is not ok. She has Aids. People are just dying of Aids and there is no treatment at all if you have no money. She is in and out of hospital. He sends her money.'**

Two women spoke of women prisoners having relationships with male prison officers. One said:

**'There is sex, between an officer and one of the women. One of the officers is having sex with one of the women, and everyone knows it. He is in her room with her every night. They are sleeping together. Of course he is going to protect that person more.'**

As part of 'normalising' the prison environment, (see Chapter Five: page 164), there are a lot of men, prison officers and prisoners, working in the women's prison every day and there were, and there are, very many close friendships between the men and

the women. There are several implications of this. There is the advantageous change that male company represents, the variety in having both sexes represented among the staff. There is also the power differential between staff and prisoners, which may be even more pronounced between male staff members and female prisoners. This power differential can render the women vulnerable to sexual abuse, even if the encounter or relationship appears consensual. One of the women spoke of the sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of a male employee while being held in the Central Mental Hospital. She said: 'I was sent to Dundrum for a week, they kept me there for five weeks and I was abused. It's not the only incidence of abuse in my life. I just don't want to talk about it', (see Chapter Five: page 150).

Nearly half of all of the women interviewed, 44%, said that they had been abused at some time in their lives, abused by men, men in their families, men who were friends of their families and men who were strangers to them. The abuses the women had endured included sexual abuse, molestations and rape, verbal abuse and threats, beatings and other physical, emotional and psychological abuses. Seven of the 'trustees', 29% of them, had been abused in their lives. Caroline said:

**'I was sexually abused by my brother at home from when I was ten until I was thirteen. In the end I got him charged. He was nineteen and twenty years old at the time. He's at home now. I don't speak to him or associate with him. I don't have a brother any more.'**

Abuse of every description featured in the lives of the addicted women. They dealt with it regularly. It was a part of their life experience, a feature in the world of drugs of their female roles. Of the 51 chronically addicted women, four of the eight teenagers had experienced all kinds of abuse; 61% of those in their twenties had suffered sexual and other abuse, all but two of the women over thirty had been raped and beaten. Dee said:

**'My father would beat me with bars and belts; he hit me with shovels, hatchets, knives and forks. He smacked me one day with a shovel across the back of the head. He smashed a mirror over my head one day and then tried to choke me.'**

Helena said:

**'My father used to give me alcohol and then abuse me. He did it to all of us. My Ma wouldn't believe me until a babysitter made an accusation against my Da. Then my brother remembered being raped by my Da. But how could me Ma not have known? Even now I can feel the anger coming up in me.'**

Rose had been:

**'raped by a fellow in a park in Ballinasloe: 'I don't know who he was. I'd taken sleeping pills and drink an' all and my friends woke me up and asked me what had happened. I was covered with blood, some fella had raped me'.**

One of the women, a nineteen year old, at the end of the interview, showed me her back which was covered, from her shoulders all the way down to the top of her jeans, with stripes from whippings she had received from her father. She said:

**'I never really had a childhood. It was a nightmare, full of crazy violence and abuse. I left home when I was eleven years old and went on the streets. At home my Dad watch's TV alone in the dark in the living room. My Mum, with all my brother and sisters, watches TV in the kitchen. My Dad is fierce and physically very strong and everyone at home is terrified of him.'**

Over 49% of the addicted women had overdosed at some stage in their lives. Only 16% of all of the interviewees had ever received counselling or therapy.

In general very few of the women were imprisoned for prostitution. Among the interviewees, three of the trustees had had long careers in prostitution; two Britons and one white South African. The Briton on the trafficking charge said: 'I worked on the streets for thirty years and I'm a dealer as well, although that's only a recent thing'. The Briton on the credit card fraud charge said:

**'It's eighteen years since I had a job and then I had a few. I worked in an old people's home. I worked in bars and in shops. For the past eighteen years I've been working as a prostitute. I work in a massage parlour and from my own flat'.**

The white South African said:

**'I've worked as an escort for ten years, sexual encounters and conversing with people. It's mostly business people. I have a wardrobe in work and I can dress up any way, I do whatever they want'.**

While very few of the women in the prison were imprisoned for prostitution, very many of the women, particularly the women with chronic drug addictions, engage in prostitution. Carrie said:

**'I love scoring good stuff. It's terrible when you do everything you can to get the few bob (money) and then you get gear (heroin) or coke, cos I'm into both, and it's really crappy stuff. You could get gear and it wouldn't be real strong. You might be on the street for ten hours and maybe only get fifty quid'.**

Within prostitution, the women are fiercely disciplined to a utilitarian sexual functionality. This brutal disciplining, within and to prostitution, is a most extreme manifestation of the patriarchal social order. This brutality was evidenced in the documentary series *The Underworld*, (Parallel Films for RTE: 2003), where women's experiences of prostitution in Ireland and women's experiences of trafficking and of being trafficked for the sex industry into Ireland were documented<sup>11</sup>. These uses of the women's bodies' evidence many women's experiences of the patriarchal social order, and they evidence the understanding many women have of women's roles in society, of the place of women in society. They also evidence many of the women's internalised sense of self; the women's learned disciplined sense of their womanhood. Their learned disciplined sense of the physical utility of female sexuality. This learning adds another dimension to the women's vulnerabilities. The women's vaginas are for sale or for rent, for the purposes of prostitution and for the purposes of trafficking drugs, (as detailed on page 230) and their vaginas are endlessly useful caches. One of the women described for me an incident that occurred in the prison when one of the women prisoners searched her, and other women, internally. She said:

**'Gold chains went missing and a young one put her hand up inside me to see if I had them. One was doing it in one of the rooms and another was keeping a lookout. I had to submit to it or I would have had me head bashed in.'**

(Jennifer)

The experience of prison was an ordeal for all of the women. The poorer women experienced more violence and degradation in their lives, and they experienced more violence and degradation within prison. They did not have the cultural capital

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<sup>11</sup> According to the documentary the 1993 *Criminal Law 'Sexual Offences' Act* moved women off the streets and into brothels, and so organised prostitution began. In 1999 *In Dublin* magazine was making up to £20,000 fortnightly from advertising massage parlours and escort agencies, the magazine was censored, it's editor Mike Hogan investigated, and the magazine eventually folded. The pimps identified in the documentary were 54 year old Marie Bridgeman, who was beaten to death shortly after her conviction for running a brothel, Tom McDonald who was described as a millionaire, Brian Byrne who was said to have brothels in north central Dublin, Samantha Blanford Hutton, who made an estimated half a million pounds annually from her brothel *Penthouse Pets* on Pearse St., and Peter McCormack, an ex-RUC reservist who moved to Dublin in 1995 and had within one year six brothels operating across the city. McCormack, identified as the biggest pimp operating in Ireland, was said to have a nationwide prostitution business. He was filmed in conversation with an apartment building security man who was in his pay and one of his female managers. He was said to use, in order to preserve his own anonymity, female front line managers. McCormack's address to the manager exemplifies the manner in which women in that world are hailed, he said: 'Natalie, give him a ride once or twice a week, right? Let him up on the black girls, let him up on you as well'.....turning to the man he said, 'any of your friends want a go on her, (pointing to Natalie), that's fine too'.....and so on. The documentary detailed the development in Ireland from the late 1990's of the lap-dancing clubs of which there was initially a benign view. There were a number of clubs in Dublin and around the country operating publicly, among them *The Barclay Club*, *Strings*, *La Petite* and *Angels*. The Garda launched *Operation Quest* to investigate the clubs. Ten clubs around the country were raided and 71 women from Eastern Europe, Russia, Africa and Mongolia were found to be working illegally. The clubs were considered fronts for prostitution and many of the women working the clubs were believed to be women trafficked into Ireland for the purposes of prostitution. The women, victims of traffickers, were treated as criminals by the Irish criminal justice system. They were prosecuted and imprisoned.

necessary to manage that environment, to perform presentations of self to prison management that would have earned them the designation 'trustee'.

### **6.3(iv) The Media**

Within their controlled, controlling and defining prison experiences, many of the women felt further controlled by the media. One quarter of them had featured in the media, in the press, and on television and radio. They felt prey to the press and many of them said that the new prison was also prey to the press, the changes and developments of the new prison. They believed that they were treated differently in prison depending on what was in the press. As detailed in Chapter Five (page 146) the media has a major role in the development of penal policy through its influence on public opinion and its influence on ministerial and government departmental opinion. These opinions, influenced as they are by the press, shape in turn, the penal policy which controls and orders the prison experiences of these women. The women believed that 90% of what was published in the media about the women and about the prisons to be untrue, (see Chapter Two: page 44).

The women experienced the press coverage as upsetting, humiliating, degrading and embarrassing. They believed themselves to be subject to hostile media discourses, (see Chapter Two: page 44). Carol said:

**'The media can do with you what they want. They don't check their facts. They write what they want to write. It doesn't matter whether what they are writing is true or not. I was in the media even before I was in court. I never had a chance. I couldn't answer back. I couldn't defend myself. First they make up stories, and then the way they present them...'**

Jean said:

**'I was in the newspapers when I was first in court for the robberies. It was degrading, and very embarrassing for my family. The newspapers mostly tell lies. They were adding stuff onto the story about me, saying a girl got stabbed an' all. That wasn't true, nobody got hurt. It's mostly all lies, for five lines of fact you can have two pages of made up stuff. After you come into prison they can literally say what they like about you.'**

Debbie said: 'I think sometimes they go on too much, making them out to be real down-and-out-junkies and bad people, they're not, some of them are real good people'. The women said that the invasions of privacy they experienced through being imprisoned were mirrored in their exposure in the media. Even within their seclusion in prison the women felt and were exposed to the press, the newspapers could say apparently anything they wanted to about the women in the prison and they could say



it apparently with impunity. The women felt powerless in the face of press scrutiny and they felt exposed to press scrutiny in the women's prison<sup>12</sup>. Yvonne said:

**'I know about two articles that have been published about me. One was in a local newspaper for being drunk and the other was in a woman's magazine for being homeless and begging. I was shocked more than anything else, they brought up my illness, that I was HIV positive and everything. I thought that was private. Both of the articles made me feel terribly ashamed'.**

The 'trustees' were generally more concerned with the press coverage than the other women although some of the addicted women were also concerned. Martine suggested that there was no need for the addicted women to be concerned because the media was only interested in big crimes, and the women with addictions generally commit only minor crimes or public order offences. The women believed that the public had a poor view generally of women in prison and they believed, about half of them, that that view was shaped in part by the press. As Niamh said:

**'Everyone in here is always on show, a topic for people to talk about. You can't be left alone to do your sentence and it's all lies as well. I think that the people out there believe a lot of the crap they read in the paper'.**

In terms of public discourses, the women said that the general public were likely to think that imprisoned women were: 'down-and-outs and low-lives', 'scumbags and junkies', 'that we're animals', 'criminals and jailbirds', 'all rowdies', 'that this is where we should be'. Maeve said: 'I think they despise people who are in prison'. Celine said:

**'I think they believe all that stuff they read in the papers. I don't think that they see us as human beings. I think that they see us as outcasts who should be treated without mercy. This is totally wrong. We are human beings who made mistakes and are paying for them. We shouldn't be treated as anything less, or stigmatised for it'.**

The degradation implicit in the status of prisoner within the structures of the prison served to render the women visible and vulnerable to the press. Women prisoners have no defence against the scrutiny of the press. In addition to this, women prisoners have no other public representation. The women themselves believed that the identities ascribed to them in the press are the identities ascribed to them by the public.

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<sup>12</sup> The women's experiences of their representations in the press could be likened to Kafka's 'apparatus' the harrow, from his short story *In the Penal Colony*, (Kafka 1992), where the condemned is strapped to the harrow, which deeply inscribes, deadily and decoratively, on the body of the condemned, the crime for which they have been condemned.

### 6.3(v) Prisoner Identities

The women discussed with me their own sense of themselves as women and their sense of themselves as imprisoned women. These identities are explored here in this section. They constructed their identities around phenomena external to themselves. Their identities were grounded in notions of themselves in relation to others, grounded in relationships, in their families and in their children; 75% of the women interviewed were mothers. The women identified themselves as mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and girlfriends. They generally did not feel in control of their lives, only 12% felt that they were. Those women who believed that they had roles in society did not believe that they had any roles other than their roles as mothers and their roles within their families. Some women talked of the problems of being a woman. Pauline said: 'you can get bullied, by fellas and bigger women than you'. Aileen said:

**'It's very hard being a woman. It's so demanding. I mean I think it's hard being a woman, the rules of society, what a woman should and shouldn't do. A lot of things men get away with, if you as a woman do it you're shunned or seen as a bad or immoral person'.**

The women generally felt that an experience of imprisonment was worse for women than for men, they felt that the entire experience of imprisonment was more degrading for women. Gail said:

**'Women don't belong in prison. Prisons are not designed for women. Prisons do not cater for women, they cater for men. Whoever thought that women should be in prison? Females feel lost in prison, they are not equipped for it'.**

Gillian said: 'it's terrible, it's very bad for a woman to be here, to experience jail, to be arrested, to be searched, everything. It's shameful. I feel it's worse for a woman, a lot worse'. Bartky (1990), talks of women's profoundly disempowering shame, which she says manifests in a pervasive sense of personal inadequacy. It was apparent that most of the women, over two thirds of them, internalised their prison experiences in a manner which shaped both their senses of self and their personal identities; above all, the chronically addicted homeless women who experience such pain and degradation in their lives that prison's shaming capacity is almost routine for them.

The women felt that the prisons undermined their personal identities, their senses of self. They felt that their identities as women were degraded by their prisoner identities<sup>13</sup>. Eithne said:

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<sup>13</sup> I asked the women how many prisons they had been in. One third of the women said they had been in one prison, one third of the women said they had been in two prisons, 11% said they had been in three prisons and 5% said they had been in four prisons, one woman had been in five prisons and one woman had been in 12 prisons. Some of the women had slept in many prison cells, two of the women said they had slept in hundreds. 237

**'In the prison you're just a number. You're stripped of your identity, your integrity and your honour. Your womanhood is taken away from you, and all you are left with is trying to keep your head up and yourself focused'.**

The women talked of the infantilising experience the prison experience. Veronica said:

**'In the prison the women are like dolls in a doll's house. The worst thing is that you are not in command of yourself. In here I feel like a child, but I am 34 years old and I have children. Some of the women here are in their thirties, their forties and fifties. Many of them have children and grandchildren. They are all, in here, treated like children'.**

On leaving prison the women believed that they were taking with them the prisoner identities so carefully crafted for them by the prisons and the penal discourses. The women, with these carefully constructed identities, had many concerns about leaving prison. One of the concerns was not to come back. Another was the worry of getting their lives together again, of getting a place to live, of keeping away from drugs and/or alcohol. About 60% of the women felt they had improved in prison, 21% of them had used the prison to detox. They had put on a bit of weight, calmed down, come off drugs. About 22% of them said that they had used the prison as a shelter or a refuge. Others were grateful for the educational opportunities they had while in prison. One or two of the women said that they could see things clearly now, they believed that they had 'copped on'. One or two said that they had learned their lesson. About 20% of the women believed that their time in prison had done nothing for them. About 36% were acutely conscious of the damage they had sustained through their prison sentences and through the loss of the time they had spent in prison away from their families and their lives. They were acutely aware of the damage they had sustained through their experiences of imprisonment. About half of the women leaving prison worried about being 'normal', they worried about being: 'like a mother and doing what normal mothers do'. Their main concerns related to their children, their families and friends, and to how these people would react to them. One quarter of the women did not believe that these people would expect to be reunited with the woman who had left them. They were fearful of the manner in which and the degree to which the prisoner identities ascribed to them would influence their relationships with their families, friends and relatives. They worried about being given a chance by society, about having a stigma attached to them. Emma said that:

**'The prison experience was like a tattoo, a tattoo of shame and pain, I don't know how long it will**

**remain with me, perhaps it will remain forever. I think that we have been punished enough. I don't know how I will think back on this place'.**

She said that this tattoo, she would have forever. Goffman discussed stigma symbols, visible signs of stigma (1963: 61, see also Curra: 2000: 26-32), as signs carrying social information. Such signs, Goffman wrote, can become a permanent part of the person. Clearly the power of the discourses of the identities of ascription, discourses which ascribed to the women infantilised, powerless, shameful, deviant identities, profoundly affected the women and their personal identities and senses of self. The women could not as agents, 'subjects capable of designating self in a signifying world', (Ricoeur: 1994: 113, see also this work, Chapter Two: page 15), privilege their own senses of self over the discourses ascribing identity to them, discursively subject positioning them.

#### **6.4 Summary**

In this chapter I profiled the women currently imprisoned and I examined in their words, their experiences of imprisonment. The population of women in prison is very small. It is primarily comprised of women who come and go very quickly from the prison. The women who spend time in prison are comprised of Irish women and non-nationals. The addicted women in the population are almost all Irish women; they tend to lead lives of petty criminality, a criminality most of them engage in in order to support their addictions. Generally homeless or living in the homes of their families of origin, they are immersed in particularly strong experiences of private patriarchy. The non-nationals who serve long sentences are generally imprisoned for drug trafficking offences. These women, and the Irish women serving long sentences, the non-addicted women, are generally designated 'trustees' by prison management. This designation has the effect of formalising the cultural division in the prison, essentially a division between addicted and non-addicted women.

For all of the women, their prison experiences degraded and infantilised them, from their reception into the prison to their experiences of control and discipline within prison. The 'trustees' were shocked by their initiation into and their experiences of prison life. The addicted women were, within prison, punished more. All of the women were comfortable with the punitive, psychiatrising signs, symbols and rituals

of the prisons. They were at ease with the prisons referents for control in terms of their ascribed identities, as recalcitrant women, as imprisoned women, as degenerate deviant women or as ill women. The women constructed their subjectivities within the signifying power of the prisons discourses. Within those discourses, prison discipline signals very powerfully, identities of ascription to the women: the locking up and locking back of the women; the strip-searching; the room searches; the surveillance; the random drugs tests; and the Healthcare Unit with its referents of madness, its strip and padded cells, its recalcitrant blankets and gowns. These signs of the women's prisons, signal to the women the lack of respect the institutions have for the women, they signal the weaknesses the institutions ascribe to the women, they signal the deviances the institutions ascribe to the women, and they signal the inabilities and incapacities the institutions ascribe to the women. Above all, they signal very powerfully the women's spoiled prisoner identities.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Presentations of Self**

In this chapter, I examine the women's expressions of self. I do this through an analysis of the women's representations of self within their personal prison space. The data is primarily from the photographs taken of the women's spaces and the photo-elicitation interviews conducted with the women. The photographs presented in the chapter represent a selection from the photographic inventory, (see Chapter Three: page 78). The issues explored are the women's expressions of their own identities within their prison space, their expressions of their experiences of their personal prison spaces, the meanings for them of those spaces and the objects within those spaces, (see Chapter Three: page 84). The women's rooms and their artefacts within their rooms are signs the women are using to signify their personal identities to the world of the female prison. The science of semiology is centrally concerned with audiences and their reception of signs. The audiences for the imprisoned women are other imprisoned women, as well as the staff and management of the women's prison, and the prisons' visitors.

#### **7.1 Female Prison Space**

In the Dochas Centre each woman is provided with a single private room, in Limerick Prison, with a place in a double occupancy cell. The spaces when provided are furnished, floor covered and painted. The women are permitted to decorate their space as they wish with their own belongings and bric-a-brac. The women cover every surface and space in their rooms and cells with expressions of themselves. They take possession of this Prison Service space and they personalise and feminise it. In this space, they serve their prison sentences. In this space, they sleep, they shower and change, they dress, they study, they entertain their fellow prisoners and prison volunteers. It is through their decoration of the spaces they occupy that these uniform prison spaces become individual signifying spaces. The spaces are filled with bricolage.

Through the bricolage each space becomes a personal signifying space, rich in signifiers, (see Chapter Three: page 77). As my photographs illustrate, within their personal spaces the women are signifying. They are performing, (see Chapter Two: page 21). The performances are performances of the feminine and the familial. The context of the performances is critical. The performances take place within the discipline and control of Ireland's women's prisons. The critical elements of the context are, the fact that the prisons are in Ireland, (see Chapter Five), and the fact that they are women's prisons. In this chapter, I consider the meaning of the women's performances, in terms of the context within which they take place, the environment of the Irish female prison; and I consider the meaning of the performances, in terms of what they communicate about the women's subjectivities, their identities, and their senses of self. The women's personal prison spaces are theatres. The rooms and cells which the women occupy are performance spaces. For the imprisoned women, the rooms become theatrical sets, within which they may present the self they choose to present. In their personal spaces, the women dramatise, perform, present themselves to other imprisoned women, prison staff and prison visitors. The women use their spaces to create particular expressions of self, and to illustrate those selves, to communicate them, to other women, and above all, to the prisons' regimes.

The women's presentations of self are structured within power relations. The powerful signifying discourses of history, of penal experts, and penal institutions, the discourses of my study. They are manifest in two distinct discourses, one overt and one latent. The overt discourse is one of relational associational femininity, encompassing themes of home, family and relationships, myself in relation to others, myself in the world, and myself in relation to my world. The latent discourse is one of a power engagement. The women's experiences of power; and their use of their spaces in communicating with the power bases of the prison. This discourse encompasses themes of power and control, themes of discipline, control, punishment and resistance. In Bosworth's (1999), study of agency and power in women's prisons, she studied

the effects of femininity on women in prison and how imprisoned women are able to transform or challenge power relations from their embodied positions. In my thesis so far, I have found women in prison to be subject to patriarchal, androcentric, indeed militaristic, penal regimes within which they are utterly controlled. The women's agency was subsumed into or stifled by the dominant structures within which they were living their day-to-day lives. I did, however, find an expression of agency on the part of the women, in terms of the manner in which they presented themselves within their personal spaces. Within the control structures of the prison the women did avail of the opportunity afforded them by the prisons to express themselves within their space. Bosworth writes (1999: 3) that having agency and being an agent is about the ability to negotiate power. While the women of my study were obliged to negotiate with the powerful discourses of their prisons, as was detailed by one of the women I interviewed (Chapter Six: page 213), there was in each and all of their negotiations, a power imbalance; one that was weighed very heavily against the women.

In an expression of agency, the women used the opportunity to their personal space as a means of self-expression. They used their space as a means of negotiating self with the regime. The curtailment of agency, the curtailment of the women's powerful expressions of self, is evident I suggest, in the ideological representations of self with which the women engaged. In overt discourse the objects/artefacts in the women's spaces were for the women, association pieces. They evidenced for the women, their place in the world. The women's worlds were generally made up of relationships, associations, and in particular, familial associations. In latent discourse, the objects in the women's rooms became props in performances. Within those performances the women used their personal spaces as arenas of engagement with the prison, with the powerful penal discourses within which they were presented and represented, within which they were subject positioned.



## 7.2 Signs and Signifiers

When a woman has been committed to prison, and has passed through all of the institutions evaluative structures, she is given a personal space, a room of her own, or a cell which she might share. The location of the space allocated to the woman signifies, as established in Chapters Five and Six, the woman's level of responsibility in the expert estimation of prison staff. The woman who has been allocated a personal prison space, occupies that space mindful of the identity ascribed to her by the police, by the criminal justice system, and by prison staff and management. The woman is also very mindful of the identity ascribed to her through and by her occupation of prison space. As I wrote in Chapter One (page 2) it is, above all, her occupation of the space that is *prison* space that designates the woman a prisoner. It is the experience of imprisonment that confers upon her, *prisoner* identity. It is her occupation of the space that is *prison* space that produces in her, from her, a *female prisoner*. Mindful of all of this, the woman occupies that space. Within that space, in Ireland, she is free to present herself as she wishes. The woman, with her new spoiled identity or with a reinforced old spoiled identity (Chapter Two: 18), positions and presents herself within her own prison space. Each woman with her bricolage, creates within her own personal space, a representation of the self which she decides to present to her prison world. Through the labour of the woman occupying the space, each individual personal prison space becomes richly representative of that individual, the occupier of that space. While, as will be seen, all of the women's rooms reflect the centrality of the feminine and the familial in their identities, the décor of the rooms tend also to reflect one of the subcultures of the women's prisons.

All of the rooms were profoundly feminine spaces. The primary norms for all of the women are those of the familial and the feminine. All of the women, older and younger, national and non-national, 'trustees' and others, addicts and non-addicts, present themselves as familial and feminine. The overarching configuration of the rooms was that of femininity. All of the rooms were

feminine rooms. They were pretty rooms. All of the rooms had pretty coordinated colours, pretty curtains, cushions and covers, pretty bric-a-brac arranged in pretty patterns. There were, in the course of my interviews, four remarkable exceptions. Each of the exceptions, for the woman involved, was a powerful expression of resistance; and each reflects the power and agency of these individual imprisoned women. In two of the four cases, young Irish women, both of them addicts, used their personal space to protest their, what they believed were, prolonged periods of imprisonment. They each refused to fully occupy their personal spaces. They were forced to occupy their rooms by prison management, but they refused to settle into the rooms, to unpack their belongings, to decorate the rooms. They conceded only, because they were forced, to occupy the space. These acts earned the women some kudos among their peers for what was perceived by some as fearless defiance of the system, but their chosen means of defiance meant that they lived, for the duration of their protest, in chaos. In any case, the protest, the refusal to settle in, was symbolic of the desire of both of the women to leave, to move on. They lived with their belongings packed up and ready to move.

The other two exceptions were two women who, by contrast, had radically extended the personal space they were allocated by the prison. They did this by annexing additional space within the prison which they adapted to their own purposes. These women were trustees, both foreign nationals, both non-addicted drug traffickers serving long sentences. One, a Jamaican woman, annexed as a study, an office on her corridor. The other, a Brazilian, annexed as an art studio, another office in that house. The acts of the two non-national women in annexing space earned them, for their capacity to manage the system to their own ends, some kudos and some envy among their peers. While many of the other women did envy these women the additional space they occupied, few could have emulated them. The act of annexing space and the use made of those spaces by those women, gave one the space within



**Photograph Fourteen: The artist's studio: Dochas Centre**

which to write, and the other the space within which to paint. The writer studied for Open University exams and she wrote a novel, some short stories, and a great deal of poetry. Much of her work was published while she was in prison and she won some awards, among them a prestigious award one year from Listowel Writers Week, (an Irish celebration of writing and competition for writers). The painter was equally prolific and she sold, during her stay in prison, very many of her paintings, both from exhibitions held in and outside the prison.

In general however, for almost all of the women, the only space they had any control over is the personal space, the room or cell, allocated to them by the prison. This personal space affords them the only privacy, however partial, they

enjoy while in prison. This space, as documented, is policed and controlled as the other spaces within the prison are policed and controlled. The officers of the prison have the same right of entry to these spaces as they have to all the other spaces within the prison, (see Chapter Five and Chapter Six). The women's personal spaces represent the world of the everyday for the women. The manner in which they inhabit these spaces are part of 'what goes without saying' within the Irish female penal institution. It is the everydayness and the taken for grantedness of these elaborate expressive spaces that warrants closer inspection and investigation. It is these taken-for-granted elaborate expressions that I explore in this chapter.

The women are performing their personal identities within the personal prison space afforded them by their penal institutions. The women understand that within our world, assumptions and judgements are primarily made through inference, (see Goffman: 1959). They understand that we are all participant observers of the social world. They understand that the other participant observers, their audiences, infer certain understandings from the performance with which they are presented. This is Goffman's stagecraft, (1959, see also Chapter Two: page 20, this work), his stage management, the dramaturgy of presenting self in everyday life, (Goffman: 1959). It is Butler's dramatic effect of performances developed through imitation, fabrication and manipulation, (1990, see also Chapter Two: page 21, this work), Butler's power of acting, the invocation of convention through reiteration and citation within the performative. The women, with their firmly fixed spoiled prisoner identities, take control of that personal space and they use it to convey, to act out, to perform, all the days of the prison sentences, their position, or their opposition, to the spoiled identities with which they have been ascribed, (see Chapter Two: page 20).

Within the spaces the women are afforded an opportunity to express their own personal identity narratives; narratives which encapsulate their own personal identities within which may be distinguished elements of their senses of self.

Goffman suggests, (1959: 24), that society is organised in such a way as to render unto individuals with particular roles, a moral right to expect to be treated in a particular way. Within a patriarchal culture, feminine women and familial women, most particularly mothers, may expect, by right, at least ideologically, to be treated with the greatest respect. Thus the imprisoned women, with their firmly ascribed spoiled prisoner identities, have an opportunity within the patriarchy of Irish society and the Irish female prisons, to claim the right to the most respectful treatment, through their culturally powerful feminine and familial roles, by signifying to audiences the centrality of these roles within their personal identities.

Denotatively, the women inhabit the spaces as homely or home-like for their own comfort. They fill the spaces with association pieces. Within the spaces they engage with popular culture. They watch movies and soap operas on TV. They listen to music on the radio. They play cassettes and cds. They are fans of particular rock and pop stars. They are knowledgeable about soccer and support particular British soccer teams. They like to draw and paint pictures, and make small items of pottery, which they do in the prison school. I explored all of these signs for their second order significances, their referent systems, (Hall: 1980), and their mythologies, (Barthes: 2000). I was concerned with the signifiers, the décor and artefacts of the women's rooms. I was concerned with the signified, the meaning of the signifiers in terms of the women's personal identities, their senses of self. I was concerned with the manner in which the women used the signifiers to signal their identities, to perform their identities. Finally I was concerned with the signification, the meaning, of these performances. Following Hebdige, (1979), Fiske, (1989), Barthes, (2000: 121), and Rose, (2001: 69-100), (see also Chapter Two: page 44), I am concerned with what precisely, in these personal prison spaces and within these identity performances, is being communicated, and within what sociological and ideological structures.

### 7.3 Representing Self

Barthes wrote, (2000: 109, see also Chapter Three: page 84), that a tree is a tree, but a tree expressed after a particular fashion, a tree decorated in a particular manner, a tree laden with images, is 'no longer quite a tree'. In the same way, in this chapter, I will demonstrate that a prison room is a prison room, but when it is a prison room inhabited by a gendered individual, a woman, it becomes something else, something, as Barthes might say, more than a room. The spaces, rooms and cells, are no longer merely rooms and cells, they have become texts. They are texts created by imprisoned women, texts which are expressed in a particular fashion. They are laden with particular images. A comparison between the following two photographs illustrates this point.



**Photograph Fifteen: An empty room: the Dochas Centre**

The photograph above depicts an empty prison room in the Dochas Centre. The photograph below depicts a room in the Dochas Centre occupied by a woman imprisoned there. The photograph below is redolent of that woman, redolent of her identity as she performed it within that space. The photograph contrasts very sharply with the above photograph. The contrast between the two rooms vividly illustrates my analogy between these female prison spaces and Barthes' trees and decorated trees.



**Photograph Sixteen: An Inhabited Room: the Dochas Centre**

There are issues generally in looking at images, and there are of course issues in looking at these images, my photographs; there were issues for the women who with me, viewed and analysed my photographs, there are issues for the readers of my thesis and there are issues for myself. There are perceptual cues embedded in our habitual perception, where meaning has become fixed, and this 'tautology of recognition', (Nichols: 1981: 37), reconfirms our ways of seeing, (Berger: 1972: see Chapter Two: page 20), our 'preferred readings', (Rose: 2001: 92). Our ways of seeing, our preferred readings, have implications for the viewing of these photographs. The women's ways of seeing the photographs are shaped by their ways of seeing their own spaces; their ways of

seeing this representation of their own spaces within their everyday lives as imprisoned women. My ways of seeing the photographs are shaped by the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of this study. Readers of my work will frame their viewing of the work and its images within their own social, and sociological and ideological frameworks.

Signs are relational; one sign has meaning in relation to the meaning of other signs, and each sign individually and collectively has meaning in relation to dominant codes, wider systems of meanings. Each sign in the women's spaces has meaning in relation to the other signs in the spaces and in relation to the wider systems of meaning within which the women's spaces are situated. This emphasizes the importance of the setting, social and cultural, of the visual image for its interpretation. The signifiers in this analysis are the prison setting of the study, the female gender of the prisoners, and the décor and the artefacts displayed within the women's personal prison spaces.



**Photograph Seventeen: A Woman's Room: Dochas Centre**

The images presented here evidence the pronounced difference in the standards of accommodation in Limerick Prison and in the Dochas Centre. In Limerick



Prison the space, most of it shared space, allowed to each woman is extremely compact, the cells are very small. In the photographs of the older accommodation in the prison, the penal nature of the institution is very obvious, as is the fact that the building is very old and out of date. In the new accommodation, the penal nature of the institution is still very apparent. Also apparent is the inappropriate design (Chapter Five: 174) of that accommodation.

Connotatively, the décor within the women's rooms is profoundly feminine. The walls are pastel shaded. Some of the windows have curtains. The curtains are patterned and decorative. One set has a lace curtain underneath. The quilt covers, with the notable exception of the Manchester United quilt cover, (below) are bright, floral and valanced. Many of them are frilled. All of them are feminine.



**Photograph Eighteen: A woman's room: Dochas Centre**

Most of the beds have soft toys on them. Cuddly furry animals, teddy bears with satin ribbons tied in bows around their necks, and big red love hearts,

many of these the product of the women's endeavours in the prisons' schools (Chapter Five: page 184). The walls are covered with pin-ups, pictures and posters of male rock and pop stars and sports stars. There are posters of exotic romantic locations and many many family photographs, baby pictures, pictures of family celebrations, pictures of family members and friends. There are a lot of greeting cards and some pictures of cartoon characters. There are pictures and paintings created by the women themselves. Among them, there are some still life's. There is one female nude, or partial nude. There are two crucified Christs; and on one wall, two sketches of a couple in an embrace, one of them overtly sexual.



**Photograph Nineteen: Woman's cell: Limerick Prison (new accommodation)  
Stainless steel toilet bowl (see Chapter Five: page 190)**

There are only two big posters representing women, one is in the above photograph, the pop group *Destiny's Child*. There other is a charcoal sketch foregrounded in the woman's room, a representation of the ideal heteronormative sexualised female form.

On their lockers and tabletops all of the women have televisions and there are stereos and cd players. Many of the bedside lockers and tabletops have knitted or crochet covers, and there are some potted plants and some fresh, some dried, and some artificial flowers. There are Mass cards and memory cards to console the women and to honour their dead; and there are lots and lots of beauty projects, creams and lotions, sprays, perfumes, powders and paints.



**Photograph Twenty: Bedside locker, Woman's Room: Dochas Centre**

There are photographs of family and friends, most of them framed. There are more greeting cards. There are the products of craft classes in the prisons' schools, dishes and vases, the whatnots and the knick-knacks that the women make in the prison school. There are ornaments, hairbrushes, glossy magazines, pot pourris. There are empty coffee mugs and full ashtrays, cleaning fluids and

sprays. There are sacred shrines with statues, crucifixes and bibles. There are school timetables, books and folders, novels and writing materials, and there are packets of sweets and containers of soft drinks. There are nicely folded pretty pastel shaded towels. There are big furry slippers, animal print slippers, 'groovy chick' slippers, and plain prison issue slippers. There are fruit baskets and bowls. There are flags, two of them celebrating illicit drugs, and there are emblems. There are games and funny colour lights. There are balloons and ribbons, cushions and covers, and lots of cds and cassettes and some videos. There is a 'welcome' mat in one room in the Dochas Centre, and a love seat in a cell in Limerick Prison (see page 275).



**Photograph Twenty-One: Bedside Locker, Woman's Room: Dochas Centre**

The signifiers in the women's rooms are their emblems of family and femininity. These signifiers signify initially, or in the first place, the women's personal identities, their performances of self. The personal identities they signify are feminine and familial. The women are feminine women; they like flowers and cuddly toys, pretty pictures and colours, satins and silks. They are fun and a little child-like; they cover their beds with toys. They are vulnerable and their vulnerabilities are reflected in the delicate décor of their spaces. Their spaces do resemble Bourdieu's female spaces of which he wrote, (2001: 57), 'whose pastel shades, knick-knacks, lace or ribbons suggest fragility and frivolity'.



**Photograph Twenty-Two: Double occupancy cell: New Accommodation, Limerick Prison**

There is of course, an incongruity in the fragility and frivolity suggested in the pastel colours, adorning spaces designed for the imprisonment of women within patriarchal and quasi-militaristic regimes (Chapter Five). While Heidensohn (1975, see also this work Chapter Two: page 39) recognised decades ago, in the 1970's, that in Elizabeth Fry's nineteenth century sexually segregated system (Chapter Four: page 99), a system which still operates, female regimes differ from male regimes in detail only. As she said, despite the pastel shades, the effects of the old institutions remain. Baudrillard (1996: 33), writes of pastels as aspiring to be living colours, while being in fact, merely signs for them, signs complete with a dash of moralism. The artefacts in the spaces indicate that the women are quite religious. This is evident in the many emblems of religiosity, the sacred shrines, the Christs, the crucifixes and the statue of the Madonna.



**Photograph Twenty-Three: From a wall in a cell in Limerick Prison**

The women are romantic and they love and indeed revere men. All of the posters, except the two mentioned above, are of men, from Bob Marley, Robbie Williams, and Eminem, to the crucified Christs.



**Photograph Twenty-four: Poster, wall in woman's room, Dochas Centre**

The women place close to them the memory cards and the photographs of family and friends. Next in space are the cosmetics and creams. Next in space are the TVs, the cd players, the magazines and the schoolbooks and notepaper. Then there are the posters and the paintings.



**Photograph Twenty-five: A Woman's Room, old accommodation (2001): Limerick Prison**

The women as they represent themselves in their personal prison spaces are good women. They love and care about their families and their families are central in their lives. This centrality is evident in the placement of the women's familial artefacts within their spaces. The family photographs and memory cards are placed centrally within the women's spaces. They are the centre of the sacred shrines, prominently and beautifully, even lavishly framed on bedside lockers and tabletops.





**Photograph Twenty-Six: Woman's Room: Dochas Centre**

Underlying the femininity of the rooms, but of equal and fundamental importance in terms of the women's representations of themselves and their identities, was the familialism of the women's lives evident in these spaces. The greeting cards, the birthday and good-wish friendship cards, for 'a dear daughter', or 'a special sister' or 'the world's greatest Mum', cover the wall space in many rooms.



**Photograph Twenty-seven: Cell in Limerick Prison**

The longer the woman stays in prison, the more she occupies the space. As the woman's occupation of the space deepens, so too does the capacity of the space to represent the woman. In other words, the length of time the woman is in her prison space correlates to the degree of representation of the woman afforded by the space.



**Photograph Twenty-eight: Desk top in a woman's room: Dochas Centre**

In addition to this, it appears that the degree of respect afforded an imprisoned woman and her space by prison staff, correlates with the degree to which she occupies that space. This may of course be related to the fact that it is the 'trustees', the generally older, non-addicted, and more responsible women, who tend to occupy prison space for the longer periods of time.



**Photograph Twenty-nine: Woman's room: Dochas Centre**

In any case, the personal space affords the women a degree of privacy, however small. It affords the women a degree of control, however small. It affords the women a degree of latitude in terms of expressing self. It seems to me that, given the small degree of privacy and control afforded the women by the nature of the space, penal space, and by the nature of their occupation of the space, as prisoners, the degree of latitude afforded the women in terms of their

expressions of self, must necessarily be equally small. Control over the women's expressions of self is vested in the society within which the women live, within the communities within which the women live, as well as within the institutions within which the women live. The women themselves construct their presentations of self within their personal prison spaces. However, their constructions and representations of self are, as will be seen, structured within the norms of their societies, their cultures and their subcultures.

As we have seen, the women are prisoners, occupying prisoner space within a patriarchal prison regime, the product of a patriarchal society. Within this cultural positioning, the women present themselves as familial women. This familialism was evident in all the rooms in the family photographs, in the



**Photograph Thirty: Beside Locker: Dochas Centre**

portraits of families, of grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, of big and small children. It was evident in the photographs of family occasions, the christenings, the first communions, the twenty-first birthday parties and the weddings. It was evident very strikingly in the memory cards and in the foetal scan (above), as it was evident in the greeting cards,

detailed above, designed for 'a dear daughter', 'a special sister' or 'the world's greatest Mum'. The centrality of this familialism in the women's lives was evident in the frequently elaborate and always prominent and proximal placement of these mementoes within space.

The sub-cultural expressions of identity evident, were those of the groups within the prisons: the older, more mature women serving long sentences, the 'trustees', the good girls; and the younger women, more likely to be Irish, more likely to be addicted, the bad girls. For the younger Irish nationals, the expressions of identity evident were identities steeped in popular culture, for example Rasta culture, (see Hebdige: 1987). These women identified with heroes of popular music and sports, among them Bob Marley. There was artefactual and symbolic evidence in some of these rooms of identities structured around illicit drug use. The emphasis in these spaces was on cosiness.



**Photograph Thirty-one: Bedside Locker: Dochas Centre**

These women occupied the space emphatically, covering all the surfaces with symbols of their identities. Frequently in their expressions of themselves they juxtapose symbols of their familialism with symbols of their counter-culturalism in a prominent display such as the one above. In the photograph above three memory cards, (mementoes devoted to people who have passed away), are prominently displayed in the centre of the top of the bedside locker. Even more prominently displayed, hanging from the top of the bedside locker, is an emblem of marijuana.



**Photograph Thirty-two: Beside Locker, Woman's Room: Dochas Centre**

These rooms were always warm and sometimes dark. They were, as were the other rooms, full of the women's belongings, their bric-a-brac. The artefacts

that they were full of were, again, things that reminded the women of home, that reminded them of family members, of friends and lovers, partners and children. The rooms were full of emblems that signified belonging, emblems that signified the kind of woman the occupier was, the kinds of interests she pursued, the kinds of friends she had, the company she kept, the leisure activities she engaged in. They had items and articles of style and fashion that powerfully identified them in terms of age, in terms of class, and in terms of belonging.

The black South African women, in addition to the feminine familialism common to all the women, prominently display in their rooms their religious identities.



**Photograph Thirty-three: Counter top, woman's room: Dochas Centre**

Their bedside lockers become small religious shrines. Many of the Irish women too, had religious shrines in their rooms, adorned with bibles. The walls of the rooms of the black South African women were frequently covered with photographs of church choirs. Usually, they themselves were one of the choristers, dressed in blue or green silk robes. Their rooms were always

immaculately clean and tidy, the air was always fresh, to point of being brisk. This manner of occupation, calls to mind the description of the 'strikingly house-proud' female cultures of the South African townships, (Chapter Six: page 164: footnote 5). The objects within the women's rooms were, they told me, memories for them. They served as connections for the women, generally connecting them to home, to family.

#### **7.4 Performing the Feminine**

For the women, their rooms were sanctuaries, spaces into which they retreated. The women's rooms and cells were personal spaces, but they were spaces of penal containment. The women used these spaces, more than any other spaces within the prison, as refuges and retreats. Women have for centuries in Ireland (see Chapter Four) sheltered in prisons. Within their prisons, these women sheltered in their own rooms and cells. Bachelard (1969, see also Chapter Two: page 38, this work), described the feeling of shelter as a feeling of well-being generated by retreat. He wrote of the sense of refuge in shelter. He wrote of the primitiveness of refuge, its animality. In relation to the women, this, I suggest, might perhaps be related to the desperation women feel sometimes, in terms of the responsibilities they carry, and the limited resources to which they have access. The experts interviewed in this work (Chapter Five: page 168), represented the imprisoned women in terms of the extraordinary burden of responsibility they carried generally alone and unsupported. While Walby (1990), Radke and Stam (1994), and Bourdieu (2001), (see this work, Chapter Two: page 22), wrote of different aspects of women's subordination in contemporary society, among them they wrote of women's everyday experiences, and women's confinement to the private sphere. These perspectives on the habitual and traditional confinement of women to the private sphere, illuminate women's experiences of their personal spaces within prison, and the women's presentations of self within those spaces. Through my exploration of the women's life and day-to-day experiences, and my exploration of the discourses and structures within which the women construct their own identities, I developed an understanding of the



need many of the women feel to seek shelter, and indeed the propensity of many of the women to seek shelter. Bachelard wrote of the covering of shelter, the huddling of it, the hiding within it, and the capacity within it for snug concealing.

Women in prison in Ireland use their personal prison spaces as dwelling, but perhaps not as chora (see Chapter Two: page 38). Their rooms are not the sacred womblike spaces of the literature; nurturing, safe, secure places, but spaces within which the women retreat to rest. Their rooms/cells are public spaces, they are somewhat less public than the other spaces within the prisons but they are not private spaces. Anyone may enter these spaces at any time, prison staff, prison visitors and people touring the prison. The objects in the spaces provide for the women symbols of identity, memories and connections. Baudrillard wrote, (1996: 15, see Chapter Two: page 37), of objects within space as symbolisations. He discussed the emotional value of objects, the emotional value of their 'presence'. He suggested that objects become spatial incarnations of emotional bonds (1996: 16). He explored the retreat into objects, (1996: 90). He said that objects have the capacity to: 'provide outlets for tensions and for energies that are in mourning', a faculty which Baudrillard claims, gives objects their soul. It is this, he suggested, that makes them 'ours'.

Connotatively, there is a femininity expressed in the spaces, the rooms and cells, and there is femininity in the placement of the objects, in the ordering of the objects. The objects are tidy and orderly, expressive in their placement in space of femininity. The objects, apart from their utility functions, perform an aesthetic function. In their placement in space they adorn that space. In addition to this, the space, the objects within the space, and their placement within the space, perform a political function. They facilitate the women with their spoiled prisoner identities in a recuperative expression of self. They facilitate the women in a performance of identity, an expression of an identity worthy of an individual of standing, an individual with a moral right to be treated in a

particular way. The women in their feminine familial ways of being expect, by right, to be treated with the greatest respect.



**Photograph Thirty-four: A Woman's Room: Dochas Centre**

They expect, as feminine, familial beings, and as mothers, to be treated with the promised respect, promised at least ideologically, of patriarchy; the respect promised within patriarchy to feminine women, to familial women, and above all, to mothers. It is thus, within performances of the feminine and the familial

that the women, within their personal prison spaces, present themselves. This is their presentation of self. Their presentation of self within their everyday prison lives.

The signification, the code, (Hall: 1980, see Chapter Three: page 84), the myth, (Barthes: 2000, see Chapter Three: page 84), or the second level meaning, which is communicated, is the women's engagement with patriarchy. It is the women's experiences of patriarchy, the patriarchy which orders and sustains everyday life within Irish prisons (see Chapter Five), the patriarchy of the total institutions that are the prisons, and the women's experiences of patriarchy throughout their lives (see Chapter Six), that is, in the final analysis, that which is being communicated within the women's personal prison spaces. The women's identity performances are the performances that the women's circumstances demand. The performances are congruous to greater rather than lesser degrees with the performances that the women engage in in their lives. The women are performing gender, they are performing the feminine as they have been socialised, throughout their lives, to perform it.

### **7.5 The Women in Their Spaces**

The women who participated in the photo-elicitation interviews (Chapter Three: page 76), generally agreed that the room/cell is an expression of the woman inhabiting it. The objects and artefacts depicted in the photographs that were important to the women, were the artefacts that belonged to them, as opposed to the artefacts that belonged to the prison. The artefacts that belonged to them were all association pieces given to them by family and friends. In many cases the women's rooms, and especially their dressing tables, were in effect cultural shrines, (see Chapter Three: page 78), to home, family and femininity. The sentiments aired by the women in terms of artefacts were sentiments of association; association with people, family, friends and place, most often home. The important things in the photographs were the things that came from home, things that came from family. The women talked of home and of making

their rooms/cells (rooms in Mountjoy Prison, cells in Limerick Prison) like home, or homely: 'my posters, my ornaments and stuff, all from home, my room is comfortable, it reminds me of my own room at home'. Helen said:

**'The cotton doilies, they make the cell look fancy...yeah, it looks homely like. The leopard print throw, my Mum gave me that. The curtains on the window, my Mum had them made for home. She had an extra one made up to give to me'.**

Anna spoke of her cell, of which she said:

**'It is lovely now. It took me a bit of time to get my bits together; my Mum passed me in stuff. I've got posters, my own duvet and my own radio and my own cushion I made in the (prison) school and a big Bob Marley flag'.**



**Photograph Thirty-five: Shared Cell: Limerick Prison**

Anna expressed an experience of prison space as imagined space. She said that her cell was full of all her own stuff, stuff from her bedroom at home, even the rug on the floor was from her bedroom at home and she said that now: 'I've all my own things it's just like my own bedroom at home'. She said that when she was out of her cell it felt just like prison, but when she was locked in her cell: 'it feels just like I'm locked into my bedroom at home...I don't mind at all'.

The artefacts in the women's rooms were important only in that they assisted them in relationships, in reminding them of their relation to others and their place in relation to the world. Maalouf's, (2000: 100, see Chapter Two: pages one), 'thread of affiliation' linking me to the crowd. The artefacts evidenced and established, visibly and visually, place, and familial and friendship ties. They were fundamental to the women's identities, to their sense of belonging, to their ways of being in the world. Miriam said:

**'This basket here, it had real flowers in it, my daughter brought it for me the first time she came. The paintings of course are my son's. The dolphins he did for my birthday. Everything here was given to me by somebody. This picture, the little round thing, Eithne gave me. All the little bits and bobs, the little piggy on the thing, Margaret gave me that. The little corn dollies, or whatever, I got those from Joanne. The little elephants up there, I got from Maria.'**

Lily said:

**'The most important things to me are my family photographs and the Mass cards and that memory card. That's my nephew who died two years ago. He was only a year and six months when he died. We keep him close. The cards from my family, the videotapes of family occasions, family weddings, they're all important'**

Bridget spoke of her craftwork as being important, her tapestries. She had given a tapestry to her neighbours as gift for helping to mind her children. One of the drawings in a photograph of her space was very important because it was a drawing of St. Patrick her daughter had made and sent to her. The Manchester United rug in the photographs she had made for her son. She had given him the rug when she went home one day for a visit. For Elizabeth, her family photographs and letters were the most important things, particularly her letters and 'the thing for holding letters' her son had made for her in school.

The women spoke of artefacts that were brought in to them. They spoke of body lotions and powders, brought in by family members: 'all my shower stuff and things, stuff my sister brings into me. She comes every week, never misses, hail, rain or shine'. Sandra spoke of: 'beauty things...shampoo, conditioners, face creams, perfume, make up, nail polish, deodorant, wipes for your faced, all that kind of stuff'. She said that she liked her skin to be nice and clear, she liked to keep looking good, that was important to her. She kept herself fit. She went to the gym and walked the yard. She said that she didn't eat at all. She was nineteen years old and she looked anorexic. I asked if this also was to keep looking good. She said, 'no, no, it's just something....(silence)'.

Some of the women had sacred shrines in their rooms. Some were adorned with rosary beads and bibles. Sally said that when she came in first she was not sleeping, so she put the bible under her pillow. By the time of interview, she had a little shrine. Deirdre said: 'my statue is important, I got it from a holy person in Limerick, she died last year. She told me to keep it beside my bed in prison, and I do. Noreen said: 'I have holy water from Knock, pictures of Our Lady, a prayer to St. Therēse, and holy medals the priest gave me. They're very important to me, they keep me safe and the baby safe'. The following is a synopsis of a discussion I had with Aisling about her sacred shrine. I asked:

**'What kind of shrine is it?' 'A holy shrine'. 'And what kind of things do you have on it?' 'A bible and medals and memory cards and photos of dead people, candles and little statues.' 'And are they all arranged in a certain way?' 'Oh yeah, the bible goes in the middle, two candles go on either side, then the rosary beads goes down the middle and then the medals on each side and then the photos. I have the shrine cos sometimes I just want to pray. I say prayers for the dead. That's for every dead person in the world, not just my dead, everyone's dead'.**

Mary, explaining clearly her own performance within prison and one of her techniques for controlling her environment, said of the holy pictures on the wall in her room: 'I only put them up for show'. While many of the women vested great personal significance in the religious artefacts they displayed in their rooms, this woman suggested that there were points to be scored in the prisons in displaying such artefacts. In the performance of appropriate feminine identity

within the Irish female prison, a display of religiosity, sincere or otherwise, was clearly advantageous.

One common theme among all of the women was a visual expression of heterosexual engagement.



**Photograph Thirty-six: Valentine Care: Dochas Centre**

In their personal prison spaces, the women visually expressed their engagement with heterosexuality, with the sexualised male and with heterosexual romance.



**Photograph Thirty-seven: Love Seat: Limerick Prison**

Clearly these expressions reflected the women's engagement with patriarchy, with the culture of dominant masculinity.



**Photograph Thirty-eight: Sex Slave Poster: Dochas Centre**



However, in general, the women's experiences of heterosexuality, as detailed in Chapter Six, (see page 230), were quite different from the experience of the powerful female gaze represented in some of the images, an example of which is the poster depicted above, from the sweet romance of some of the images, the valentine card (page 243),



**Photograph Thirty-nine: Passion: A wall in a woman's cell: Limerick Prison**

and from the shared passion of the heterosexual embrace of some of the images, as in the photograph above. In reality, as established in Chapter Six, (see page 230), although the women were emphatically heterosexual, a few were in relationships, and only 12 were married. As detailed in Chapter Six, all of the women interviewed, 83 women in total (see Chapter Three: page 69), said that there was no sex in the prisons. They discussed with me generally a lack of interest in sex and the little pleasure many of them derived from sex. Yet, it became apparent in this element of the research, that the women idealized heterosexual love and sexuality. It seems that the women's problematic experiences of heterosexuality and the family, need to be measured against the ideological representations of romantic love, romanticised heterosexual relationships, and indeed the family, which they displayed in their spaces. The

ideological representations they displayed represented such relationships and units as unproblematic, as consensual, fair and balanced, (see Walby: 1990, see also Chapter Two: page 24, this work).



**Photograph Forty: From a wall in the Dochas Centre**

What is apparent is that the women are immersed in a heterosexual culture of dominant masculinity. Within that culture it is appropriate for a woman to be in a relationship with a man. This mirrors McRobbie's analysis of Jackie magazine (1982, see also Chapter Two: page 46, this work). McRobbie found in her analysis, which was conducted over twenty years ago, that the magazine was an instrument of social control, steeped in the communication of stereotypical, patriarchal and hegemonic values about the female and the feminine. It is clear from my research that even though the women suffer

greatly in these relationships, heterosexual familial ideology is so powerful within all of their lives, all of their sub-cultures, their communities and societies, that the women actively seek these frequently painful damaging relationships and the consequent overwhelming responsibilities. What is also clear is that this is the case today as much as it was the case in 1980, when McRobbie conducted her research.

As has been shown (page 241), the objects in the women's rooms were elements in the women's gift culture. Among the women, the giving and receiving of gifts established and reinforced for them their relationships with family and with other women in the prison. The gifts marking the esteem and affection within which the women were held. Ricoeur, (1994: 330), wrote of the justice of exchanges of reciprocity, as dialectics of self-esteem, of action, and of affection. Alice highlighted a soft toy in a photograph of her room which one of her friends made for her in the prison's soft toys class. Caroline highlighted clay models, which she said: 'all the travelling girls made for me before they got out'. Elaine said: 'this cloth I laid on my table, this was a gift from another prisoner'. Geraldine: 'that's a toy I made in the soft toys class. I gave it to Marion's daughter when she came to visit, she liked it'. In addition to the gifts the women received from friends and family, and the gifts they exchanged among themselves, the women discussed the prison's gift economy (see Chapter Five: page 160). Douglas, (1994: 162), in her reflection on gifts suggests that the gift economy is more visible than the market economy, that within a gift economy, gifts are given in the context of public drama. The gifts the women exchange with other imprisoned women and with their friends and family, unlike the prison gift economy with its gift cycles. Within the prisons' gift economy, as stated in Chapter Five (page 161) the women are engaged in permanent commitments which articulate the dominant institutions. The gifts the women exchange with each other are part of complex cycles of exchange and reciprocity, cycles of love and support, which promote self-esteem, well-being and confidence.

In terms of identity, the women are prisoners first, they are infantilised for control, they are feminine in expression and representation, and their feminine engagement with the prison, system and structure, is essential in terms of securing the prison's gift. Their emphatically feminine representations of self facilitate their necessary engagement with the discourses of the patriarchal penal system within which they are confined. The women in their prison spaces are making meaning, making meaning that is meaningful to the powerful within the institutions. It is in making this meaning that the women are themselves made. The female prisoner is constituted within the powerful discourses of the penal gazes. In engaging with those gazes and responding to them, as the women must, the women present their own discourses of normative femininity. The ostensible freedom afforded the women in their personal prison space could be interpreted as a disciplining mechanism through which the women are facilitated in a performance of their ideal personal identities; ideal personal identities which conform to the patriarchal ideologies around which the prisons are structured. In performing approved feminine familial personal identities, the women learn them. In turn, they demonstrate them. They teach these identities, through demonstration and display, to younger or newer women in the prison, to poorly socialised women in the prison, and to rebellious women in the prison. In this manner these feminine familial personal identities become inscribed on the selves of imprisoned women, and the women are further socialised into patriarchal ways of being. Woman as constructed with the patriarchal Irish prison system is private, she is confined to and concerned with home and family, she is non-productive, consuming, leisured and decorative.

## **7.6 Summary**

This final element of the research was designed to facilitate an exploration of identity and women in prison as the women represent themselves within their personal prison space. In the chapter, I read the women's rooms. I explored the signs of the rooms. I found the women's personal spaces to be profoundly representative of the discourses within which the women live their lives, within

which they are imprisoned, and around which their prisons are structured. The women's identities as performed within their own personal prison spaces were identities steeped in the feminine, the familial, in relational ways of being. Their identities, as they themselves represent them in their prison space, are immersed in family and femininity. The women of my study, composed their personal identities around patriarchal models of the feminine steeped in heterosexual familialism. The femininity of the women's personal prison spaces was seen to be a reflection of the expressions and representations of femininity permitted or facilitated by the patriarchal nature of the space within which the representations are manifest, Irish female prison space.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion**

Within theoretical criminology an increasingly sterile debate was being conducted as to whether women prisoners are subjugated by the prison or resistant to its coercive discourses. By demonstrating via a coherent and complex theoretical analysis drawing on both criminological and communications theory, that women prisoners are both subjugated as prisoners and resistant to subjugation as women, this thesis makes an original contribution to criminology, communications, and sociology. The data collection methods employed in the research encompassed quantitative and qualitative methods with visual elements. The methods used were observation, in-depth interviews including one group interview, spatial analysis which led to the development of a visual/photographic exploration of prison space, content analysis, archival analysis, discourse analysis and semiotics. Although there are photographs of women's prisons in other works, this is the first work in which photographs have been analysed to illustrate how women prisoners use prison space to preserve their identities as women.

In relation to the contemporary debates to whether women's identities are completely subjugated by the prison or whether women prisoners are able to resist identity-subjugation, my analyses of the present-day experiences of women prisoners in Ireland suggests that, although women prisoners are subjugated as prisoners, they have developed ways to resist subjugation as women. The illuminating but, in this thesis, necessarily partial analysis of the historical, social and spatial discourses subject positioning women prisoners in Ireland suggests that further full scale research projects might usefully be undertaken in relation to each of these three areas. By analysing the ways in which contemporary women prisoners in Ireland constitute their prison and non-prison identities within contemporary social and penological discourses, the thesis has contributed a new dimension of knowledge to the ever-developing areas of Irish prison studies in particular and to criminology, penology, communications, sociology and women's studies generally.

**The Dochas Centre**  
**The Women's Prison at Mountjoy Prison**

In 2004, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, announced that the new women's prison, the Dochas Centre, is to be demolished. The site on which it stands, with the rest of Mountjoy Prison, is to be sold for development. The money raised from the sale is to be used to fund the building a new super-prison on a greenfield site, no more than twenty miles from Dublin city centre. The new prison is to accommodate the four populations of Mountjoy Prison, male and female offenders, young male offenders, and male prisoners of the Training Unit. The Dochas Centre represents the realisation of a vision for women in prison shared by Governor John Lonergan, some officials of the Irish Prison Service, the management, staff and prisoners of the women's prison, and two successive female Ministers for Justice, Nora Owen and Máire Geoghegan-Quinn. The prison cost £30m to build, it opened in 1999.

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## **Appendix One - Ireland's Prisons**

**Arbour Hill, Dublin 7:** Adult male prison catering for sex offenders mostly. Its population is approximately 145.

**Cork, Rathmore Road:** A closed committal prison.

**Castlerea, Co Roscommon:** A closed prison with a capacity for 200 prisoners. One third of these are sex offenders.

**Curragh, Curragh Camp, Co Kildare:** A closed prison with about 96 prisoners almost all of whom are sex offenders.

**Fort Mitchell, Spike Island, Cobh, Co Cork:** Male juvenile offenders with about 10% of the population over 21.

**Limerick Prison, Mulgrave St. Limerick:** High security sentence and remand prison with a capacity for about 220 prisoners

**Loughan House, Blacklion, Co Cavan:** An open centre for young male offenders.

**Mountjoy Male:** Ireland's largest prison, high security. Up to 750 men imprisoned mostly over 21 years.

**Dochas Centre:** Female prison, high security prison with a capacity for 82 female prisoners.

**Portlaoise Prison, Dublin Road, Portlaoise:** High security prison. Male population is divided into nine separate groupings.

**Shanganagh Castle, Shankhill, Co Dublin:** Open detention centre for male juvenile offenders.(closed 2003)

**Shelton Abbey, Arklow, Co Wicklow:** Open prison for male offenders

**St Patrick's Institution, North Circular Road, Dublin 7:** High security young male offenders institution

**Training Unit, Glengarriff Parade, North Circular Road, Dublin 7:** Male adult closed prison training unit

**Wheatfield Place of Detention, Cloverhill Rd, Clondalkin, Dublin 22:** Closed prison with a capacity for 360 male prisoners

**The Midlands Prison, Portlaoise:** Closed male prison

## Appendix 2

### A Journey into the Women's Prisons

My voluntary work with the women's prison began in 1998. In that year John Lonergan, Governor of Mountjoy Prison, was invited by the staff of the Community Office in Dublin City University to talk to the people there about society's attitudes to prisoners. The Governor, at the end of that lunch, invited those assembled to visit the prison to see for themselves the prison and the prison conditions. A group of those people assembled accepted his invitation, myself among them, and we visited the male prison at Mountjoy. On the day a prison officer met us at the main gate and escorted us into and through the prison. When we commenced our tour the men, the prisoners, were at lunch and so locked in their cells. We did gain access, with the permission of the occupants, to a cell occupied by one man, a cell occupied by two men and a cell occupied by four men. We were witness to men living out lives in cramped unclean places, places hidden from the sun and the sky, places hidden even from fresh air. We were witness to tiny rectangular exercise yards, reminiscent of the prison yards of old black and white movies; yards accessed by these imprisoned men for one or maybe two hours a day but not every day. We stood as we commenced our tour in the circle of the hub and spoke of the old Panopticon style prison that is Mountjoy Prison and when lunch for the prisoners was over we stood once again in that circle, then we saw hundreds of men, the hundreds of men imprisoned in that prison. They stood, congregated, along their corridors, along the tiers of those corridors that reach out from the circle of the hub of that old Panopticon. The men stood on corridors that defined them and defined their existence, A1, A2 or A3, B1, B2 or B3 and so on. These letters and numbers defined the men as first timers or as recidivists, defined them as rural men or as city or Dublin men, defined them as strong men or as weak or sick men. These men, when their cell door was unlocked, could move up and down the corridor on which they were imprisoned. They could move up and down those corridors and no further. The men live out their lives, weeks, months, years and decades of their lives, on those corridors that defined them, labelled them and bound them, defined for them and bound for them their company, their congress and their assembly. The men, viewed as they gathered in large numbers to visit the tuck shop with its Mars Bars, its Sun Silk Shampoo and its pastel shaded, gilt edged birthday and greeting cards, appeared contained, caged and threatening. The men in turn viewed us with interest, some of them, with curiosity,

some of them, and with aggression and resentment, expressed through calls and shouts directed at us. We left the prison that day, grateful, profoundly and silently, for the freedom to pass from the place. We were all appalled and shocked at the Dickensian conditions within the prison.

Following that initial visit I thought that it would be interesting to see the women's prison. I contacted the Chaplain in Mountjoy Prison who put me in touch with Kathleen McMahon, then Assistant Governor in the women's prison, who very kindly agreed to meet with me and show me around. We met at the new female prison which was at that time under construction and nearing completion on a site in front of the male prison at Mountjoy, between the male prison and the North Circular Road. Kathleen told me something of the vision of the prison staff and the Prison Service for the new prison. This vision is encompassed in the prison's mission statement. Then she showed me the women's prison, the prison within which the women were at that time incarcerated, a place that seemed to me to be like a really wild boarding school<sup>1</sup>, a St Trinians on heroin.

At that time the women were imprisoned in one wing of St Patrick's Institution and they had been there for ten years, having been 'upgraded' from the old basement of St Patrick's Institution which had served as the women's prison since the 1950's. The prison the women occupied was a corridor of cells on three levels, each level was constructed of cement, steel and wire, the corridors on each level of steel and wire, the third floor was visible from the ground floor and vice versa. It was possible for the women imprisoned on different floors to conduct conversations by shouting from one corridor to the next, the women shouted to each other apparently ceaselessly; the noise level was incredibly high. The women had a small exercise yard and within it a small covered shelter with a few benches. The school housed in pre-fabricated units was beside the yard. The entire open space was secured with huge expanses of high wire fencing. It was overlooked by another wing of St Patrick's Institution and so the women in the yard could communicate with, and they were subject to the communications of, the young men imprisoned on that wing.

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<sup>1</sup> Walklate (1999) commented that women's prisons often appear to be akin to boarding schools when in fact women experience prison as a "brutalising process", (see Bacik: 2002: 146).



I was very anxious, having met with and listened to both John Lonergan and Kathleen McMahon and having seen Mountjoy Prison and the women's prison, to do something to help the women. My initial thought was that I might be able to make a contribution through sourcing props for plays. When I suggested to Kathleen that I might be able to help, she asked me if I would be willing to 'be-friend' a prisoner. She explained to me that 'befriending' meant being a friend to a prisoner, visiting them regularly, chatting with them, and supporting them in a small way. I said that I would like to do that and she introduced me to my first friend, Tara.

To meet Tara I used to call to the main gate of St Patrick's Institution, the young offenders' facility, and ring the bell. An officer would peer at me through a spy hole then open a small door in the big prison door and ask me my business. I would identify myself, my name, my institutional affiliation and my volunteer worker status. They would admit me to the tiny dreary waiting room with the grubby window, the smoke stained walls and the broken chairs, where I had to sit until an officer from the female prison came to collect me; I sometimes sat there waiting for an hour. When the officer came she, generally a woman, would escort me across the yard to the high wire fence that marked the entrance to the female prison, past the officer on guard, up the steps to the gate, past another officer on guard, who signed me in, allowing me through the always locked gate into the ground floor corridor of the women's prison. That ground floor corridor was really quite remarkable and the long walk down its length was, for the uninitiated at least, extraordinarily daunting. That walk always intimidated me and sometimes frightened me. I remember the women I encountered on that corridor, young and old women, Irish and international women, strong women and weak women, and the 'strung out' women, women addicted to heroin, ashen faced with emaciated bodies.

At the far end of the corridor behind a wall of metal bars the officers congregated around a small office. The most troubled among the imprisoned women congregated at that wall of metal bars. The women constantly pleaded with, cajoled, begged or threatened the officers at the other side of the divide. They wanted cigarettes, sleeping pills, physeptone, phone calls, visits, temporary release, and so on. The tiny chaplaincy, a converted ground floor one woman/man cell, was on the wrong side or at least on the lively side of the wall of metal bars. The escorting officer would ask

me wait there while she located the woman I was visiting. I viewed this apparent mayhem from the chaplaincy in amazement, some awe and more than a little trepidation.

The woman I was visiting would be located and told she had a visitor and she would come down to the tiny chaplaincy to meet with me. Tara, my first friend in the prison, was about twenty-two years old, tall, slim and stylish dressed in combats and a tee shirt every time we met. I felt during our short acquaintance that she pitied me in a way, that she was appreciative of my good intent and that she was interested in my interest in that place and its people. She was very kind to me and she tried all the time to help me, to explain to me how things were for her and the other women in that place. She tried all the time we were together to expand my understanding. She told me during our brief acquaintance that her boyfriend had died, that he had taken his own life while imprisoned in Mountjoy Prison. She described for me how the Governor had come to her cell; she too had been in prison at the time, to tell her of his death. She spoke to me of her father and she explained to me how her father could always be counted on, if she was really stuck, to supply her with heroin. Within about five months of meeting, Tara went to a drug rehabilitation centre: I telephoned her regularly and had just made arrangements to visit her when she absconded. She appeared again in the prison a couple of years later, looking older, thinner and completely exhausted. I saw her once only; she left the prison the day after I saw her. Governor Lonergan announced at a Christmas gathering in 2003 in the women's prison that Tara had passed away.

I began to visit the female prison on Sunday evenings, going in at about 5pm and leave at about 7pm before lock-up. I was allowed to bring in small gifts for my friend, chocolate, biscuits, cigarettes, a book or magazine or some other small token of a visit. The protocol was that I mentioned this to the officer in charge and sometimes they asked to see the gift but they never, in my experience, interfered with the gift giving. My second friend was Nicole. Nicole is a chronic drug addict in her early twenties; she lives on the streets because she has a long history of being sexually abused by men in her home, friends and relatives of her mother's. I never managed to establish a relationship with Nicole, primarily because she was never around long enough. I do still occasionally chat to her; she's regularly in the prison. I know that

she believes that the officers and the Governors of the prison 'are very fond' of her. This belief is, I think, crucial for Nicole in terms of her sense of herself. My sense is that Nicole feels safe supported and nurtured in the women's prison and this is an area that I explore further in the data analysis chapters.

While I was engaged in this first experience of prison visiting, I came across *Pathways*, an organisation dedicated to supporting and training people who have left prison. One day while visiting *Pathways* I heard about a training programme for prison volunteers being organised by the Sisters of Mercy. I asked for and was given permission to join their training programme. I attended this programme with about twenty women volunteers every Friday morning for twelve weeks. Every week some women imprisoned in Mountjoy Prison were bussed from the prison across town to join us and occasionally we went in cars across town to the prison to meet there. The women talked with us and to us of their experiences of imprisonment and these critical encounters helped develop relationships as well as expand understanding. Through the training programme we met officers, Governors, medics, Probation and Welfare people, prisoners and ex-prisoners, drug addicts and recovering drug addicts, counsellors and psychologists involved with the women's prison and all the time I continued visiting on Sunday evenings. By the end of this training programme I was considerably more comfortable in the tiny chaplaincy on Sunday evenings.

On Christmas Eve 1999 the last of the women from the old female prison in St Patrick's Institution moved into The Dochas Centre, the new, purpose built female prison at Mountjoy Prison. The move was quite traumatic. The prison service was anxious that all the women be in the new prison for Christmas and so they moved in, most of them, in a relatively unprepared state. In addition to this, the architecture of the new female prison is radically different from the old female prison. While the women in the old prison were held on one corridor on three levels and everyone could see everyone else all the time, in the new prison the women were imprisoned in separate houses in two separate yards. The women felt isolated and so did the staff. The regime and the vision for the new prison held by Governor John Lonergan, the staff of the prison and the Prison Service are different from the old prison. This was highlighted already in my first meeting with Kathleen McMahon, (see page 40) and the new prison was to be managed by a multi-disciplinary team, (see Chapter Four).

Philosophically the staff moved from guarding to supporting prisoners. Some staff found this transition too difficult and they transferred out of the women's prison to work in male prisons. At the same time staff working in male prisons became interested in the new ethos of the women's prison and they transferred in. There were many difficulties to be overcome and many issues to be dealt with in the new prison.

I moved to the new prison with everyone else and was, by this time, making my own friends within the prison, no longer needing formal introductions. One day Kathleen, by this time Deputy Governor, telephoned me and asked if I could find someone who spoke Portuguese or Spanish who would befriend two young Brazilian women who, with no English, were facing long prison sentences. My colleague in DCU, Dr Pat O'Byrne, of the School of Applied Languages and Cultural Studies, (SALIS), volunteered to take on this role, she joined me on my prison visits which moved to Friday evenings. Together we visited and we still visit the prison, generally every Friday evening. As I became more and more involved with the women's prison, more and more aware of the circumstances of the women and more and more concerned to make a contribution in some way to their lives, I developed a summer school in the prison and I became involved in a Quaker prison project, Alternatives to Violence, (AVP).

**3.1(i) A Prison Summer School:** By the time the women moved to the new prison I was quite familiar with the prison, with the women of the prison, with the staff and management of the prison and with the structures of the prison. I realised that the prison school, run by the Vocational Education Committee, the VEC, as are all the schools in our prisons in Ireland, (see Chapter Five), closes for the summer, as the schools in the community close for the summer holidays. I wanted to do something to help the women pass the summer and I decided to organise and run a summer school within the women's prison. It seemed to me imperative that there be some programme in place for the women for the summer, because of the boredom of prison and the lethargy of prison. I believed that that programme should be about punching in the summer for the women, engaging them and entertaining them, teaching them a little and exposing them to different ideas, different opportunities to learn and maybe even different ways of learning. Dublin City University and Mountjoy Prison agreed to co-fund my summer school for three years as a pilot project and NorDubCo, an

umbrella organisation for organisations committed to the development of North Dublin, agreed to support the summer school administratively. In 2000 I ran the first Summer School in the prison. The first year the school ran for six weeks from mid July until the end of August, it had nine modules, among them dance, creative writing, drama and jewellery making. We closed the Summer School in September with a graduation ceremony where certificates for attendance and prizes for contributions were presented to the women. The graduation was graced with performances by the women of dances they had learned, by readings of short stories or poems they had written and by displays of craftwork they had produced. Following the displays and the presentation of prizes and certificates we all sat down together to a special buffet lunch provided for us by the prison.

In 2001 I ran the second Summer School, this year for five weeks over more or less the same time period with sixteen modules including 'Snapshots of Science' from DCU, 'Developing your Child' from the professional staff of the children's play area at the Visitor's Centre at Mountjoy Prison, Jewellery Making, Batik and Tie Dye, Meditation, Glass work and Beginners and Advanced Painting from the National Gallery. By now, having been through the experience of running a Summer School in the women's prison once, I was more confident and more at home with and more familiar with the women and the women's prison. In the second year I encouraged women imprisoned in the prison to teach a module or modules in the School. Three women imprisoned in the prison taught classes that year. In the third year the Summer School ran over the same five-week period with again sixteen modules, this time four of the modules were taught by prisoners. In 2003 the fourth year of the Summer School the women in the prison who had taught modules in the school took ownership of the school. They devised modules and taught modules and they engaged women in the school who had never before engaged with programmes in the prison. Some of the women in the prison are not interested in engaging in the activities provided in the prison; this issue is dealt with in detail in Chapter Six. The women prisoners teaching in the Summer School were able to engage some of these women, I think because of the fact that they are of that place, they are women prisoners too. So the women who are reluctant to engage become more confident with these women, are more prepared to admit to these women that they don't know what is going on, that they don't understand the instructions, that they can't read

whatever it is they are expected to read or that their writing is not as good as they would like it to be, and so find it easier to engage. The Summer School is a micro project. It is small and flexible. It can and it is tailored uniquely to the skills and interests of the women in the prison. It is centred and based in the prison. It is run, in large part by imprisoned women and it is now part of the annual calendar within the prison.

**3.1(ii) A Quaker Project:** Through my work in the prison I became aware of a Quaker project called Alternatives to Violence, (AVP). This voluntary project runs weekend workshops on violence and alternatives to violence in, among other places, our prisons. The AVP programme operates on three levels, beginners, intermediate and advanced, and on satisfactory completion of the three levels participants may, if they wish, become apprentice facilitators with the project. I attended and satisfactorily completed the three levels and so I am now an apprentice facilitator with AVP. AVP has a very large network of facilitators and apprentice facilitators throughout our prisons.

A weekend workshop in a prison with AVP is quite a commitment. Basically you go into the prison on Friday evening at 5pm and you stay there until about 7pm on Sunday evening, leaving only to go home each night to sleep. An AVP weekend is a high-energy weekend facilitated and attended by prisoners and non-prisoners alike. It is exhausting, even the prospect of it is exhausting, but it is also powerful and extraordinarily rewarding. The weekend is comprised of non-stop games and role-playing with breaks for tea and biscuits and nice lunches and dinners provided by prison staff. On these weekends meals are often served privately to the group engaged in the workshop so that the energy of the workshop and the bonding that takes place between the members of the workshop is maintained. One of the games played is the adjective name game. You pick an adjective that you think represents you and the adjective you pick has to begin with the same letter as the first letter of your Christian name, in AVP my adjective name is Colourful Christina.

I participated in the one and only AVP weekend in the women's prison. That weekend seven women from the prison completed the programme and graduated. They were presented with certificates marking their achievement. Two of those

women, Pretty Pamela and Angel Angie, to give them the AVP adjective names they chose for themselves, have since died. Pretty Pamela was a drug addict who spent a lot of time in both Limerick Prison and The Dochas Centre, imprisoned for relatively minor offences, possession of drugs and shoplifting, she regularly came and went from the prison. She was tall and slim with shoulder length dark hair. She was a bit giddy, quite gentle and very shy. During one of the role-plays that weekend she played the Governor of the prison. In my raincoat with my spectacles on the end of her nose she played the role of Governor for all she was worth and her performance brought the house down. Pretty Pamela died this year of a drug overdose a couple of days after a release from prison. She was 22 years old. Angel Angie worked as a painter in the prison, painting walls and rooms with the trades people in the prison, she felt at home in the prison, she liked The Dochas Centre, she liked it so much she refused to leave when she had served her sentence. This year shortly after she was eventually released she was taken back in under arrest and she died that night in the prison. She was 32 years old. The first woman to die in the new women's prison died in 2001. When she died she was given an adjective name by the media. She was called Lonely Lynda. She had been arrested in the city on a public nuisance charge, apparently when arrested she had been trying to throw herself under a bus on O'Connell St; with a history of depression and self-injury there was no place for her to go, no appropriate place to send her, so she was criminalised and imprisoned. She took her own life a couple of days later in the prison. Lonely Lynda was thirty-seven years old.

It frequently happens in The Dochas Centre that women refuse to leave the prison. They refuse to leave because they have no place to go. I met Rose, a friend of mine, one day at the doors of Mountjoy Prison. She was in a fairly agitated state trying to get back into the prison, she was afraid she told me that while she was out of the prison the officers might give her room away.

AVP weekends are utterly unique in the insight they give you to other people. You begin to understand sometimes just how much some people have missed, you begin to see just how sad and inevitable sometimes some lives are and you get a sense sometimes of precisely how unjust our society can be. Over the course of a weekend you become immersed in the energy of the prisoners, the energy that comes to them

from the sense of holiday, the sense of vacation they get from an AVP weekend. Instead of a routine prison weekend, they spend the weekend in a space that is prison space but it is not prison space. It is a space away from the routine prison space with which they are so familiar. They spend the weekend with friends and strangers from the community outside. The connection for them is a connection with the outside; the connection for them is with people who are free.

AVP weekends are wonderful weekends in prisons but they happen only in male prisons. I participated, as I said, in the one and only AVP weekend held in the women's prison. There was only one because the co-ordinators of AVP feel that the population of the women's prison is not suited to AVP weekends, they feel that AVP workshops won't work in the women's prison. I hear that so much in the prison. I hear that this won't work in the women's or that won't work in the women's. When I ask why I'm told that the women are too emotional or that the women are too unstable, or that the population of the women's prison is too small to sustain the activity or the project. The population of the women's prison in Ireland is a very very small population; there are only around 100 women in prison in Ireland at any one time. Of those 100 women at least 35% would be on remand and thus likely to leave the prison at any time, perhaps 20% would be in the prison on very short sentences, hours or days, and focused solely on getting out of the prison and sorting out the turmoil their lives have become because of the prison sentence, another 20% could be too ill to participate in a prison project, some of them withdrawing from drugs, a further 10% might be committed to other projects, more long-term projects, and so would not be free to participate and so it goes. The potential population for any project operating within the women's prison is very very small, and this, I think, should be seen as a good thing rather than a bad thing.

The profile of the women of the women's prison is radically different to the profile of the men in the male prisons. Where there are 3,000 men in our prisons committed many of them to prison for serious offences, (see Chapter Four), we have 100 women in the women's prisons committed to prison generally for nuisance type offences. The population of our women's prison is small and unstable in the sense that the women come and go often very quickly from the prison, for the most part the women in the prison are serving short sentences as I said for generally relatively petty



offences. The population of the women's prison is a different population to work with compared to the male population of the prisons and because the population is different it is often constructed as more difficult to work with. This is a critical issue for women in prison in Ireland. It is a critical issue for them in terms of how they are represented and in terms of how they are perceived and it is a critical issue for them in terms of the supports they are likely to receive. As stated my work as a volunteer in the women's prison at Mountjoy led to my PhD research, this ethnographic study of identity and women in prison in Ireland.

**Appendix Three**  
**Interviewees (Working with the Prisons)**

<b>Nora Owen</b>	<b>Former Minister for Justice</b>
<b>Sean Alwyard</b>	<b>Director General the Prison Service</b>
<b>John Lonergan</b>	<b>Governor, Mountjoy Prison</b>
<b>Catherine Comerford</b>	<b>Assistant Governor, The Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Kathleen McMahon</b>	<b>Assistant Governor, The Dochas Centre</b>
<b>TJ Walsh</b>	<b>Assistant Governor, Limerick Prison</b>
<b>Dr Helen O'Neill</b>	<b>Psychiatrist, Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum</b>
<b>Marcy Barron</b>	<b>Head Teacher, Dochas Centre School</b>
<b>Psychologist</b>	<b>The Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Anne Sheedy</b>	<b>Registered Nurse, The Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Mr. Walsh</b>	<b>Head Chef, The Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Mary Brennan</b>	<b>Probation Officer, The Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Fr Eamon Crossan</b>	<b>Chaplain, The Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Ann Marie Brown</b>	<b>Manager, Visitors Centre, The Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Valerie Bresnihan</b>	<b>Chair, Irish Penal Reform Trust</b>
<b>Prison Visiting Committee</b>	<b>Mountjoy Prison</b>
<b>CONNECT Project</b>	<b>Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Society of StVincent De Paul</b>	<b>Dochas Centre</b>
<b>PACE</b>	<b>Dublin</b>
<b>Circuit Court Judge</b>	<b>Dublin</b>
<b>Tim Carey</b>	<b>Historian, Kilmainham Jail</b>
<b>Male Prison Officer</b>	<b>Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Female Prison Officer</b>	<b>Dochas Centre</b>
<b>Eamon Mullane</b>	<b>ACO, Limerick Prison</b>
<b>Camilla McGourty</b>	<b>Head Teacher, Limerick Prison</b>
<b>Vincent Sammon</b>	<b>Director Of Education, Mountjoy Prison</b>
<b>John Clinton/Larry Buggy</b>	<b>Prison Officers Association</b>
<b>Sue Richardson</b>	<b>Former Prisoner, Mountjoy Female Prison</b>
<b>Dr. Ronan Ryder</b>	<b>Medical Doctor, Limerick Prison</b>
<b>Sister Mary</b>	<b>Chaplain, Dochas Centre</b>

**Appendix Four**

**Interview Schedule (General)**

**Those who worked, or are working, in or with the Female Prison and/or Female Prisoners**

**The Female Prison  
Issues  
Concerns**

**Historic Irish Female Prison/Prisoners**

**The Old Female Prison  
Issues  
Concerns**

**The New Female Prison  
Genesis (Socio-Political)  
Issues  
Concerns**

**The purpose of the prison  
Design critique**

**Female Prisoners  
Issues  
Concerns**

**Women in Irish Society  
Deviant Women  
Women and Space  
Irish Female Prisoners  
Irish Female Prisoners and Space  
Irish Female Prisoner and Prison Life  
Issues  
Concerns**

**Things to be particularly proud of  
Things to be particularly concerned about**

**Critical issues**

**Issues in imprisonment  
Issues in female imprisonment  
Separate implications of female imprisonment, if any  
The future of female imprisonment  
Its purpose**

**The Product of Prison?  
Other issues**

**Appendix Five**

**Women in Prison  
Interview Schedule  
2001**

Questionnaire No.

Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

Status

Committal Date

Sentence

Offense(s)

Any previous convictions?

What for?

Remand?

How long?

Release Date

### **Family and Home**

Your current address/home/homeless

Where were you born?

Where are your parents?

Occupations?

Tell me about your family

Marital Status:

No. of Children:

Genders

Ages of Children

Whereabouts of children

What is/will be your involvement with your children

Fathers of children

Whereabouts of fathers

Level of Support

Tell me about relationships (Family/Partners/Children/Friends/Work

Age

Ever been in care?

Have you ever been abused?

By whom?

What kind of abuse?

Have you ever abused anyone?

Who?

What kind of abuse?

### **Crime and Prison History**

How old were you when you first committed a crime?

Can you remember why you did it?

What did you do?

How old were you on your first arrest?

How old were you on your first conviction?

How old were you when you first went to prison?

How did you feel?

Tell me about that

Why are you in prison?

### **Education and Training**

What was school like?

Can you read?

Can you write?

Are you receiving any instruction?

In what areas?

Have you any exam certification?

Tell me about the school here

What classes do you attend?

How often do you go?

Tell me about open learning here.

What do you think of the school?

Tell me about the CONNECT project

What do you think of the CONNECT project?

Have you been to the library?

How often?

When?

What do you think of the library

What activities are you involved in here?

### **Work/Employment**

What did you work at outside?

What did you do?

Wages/Salary?

If not, how did you survive?

Are you in debt?

What does that mean to you?

Do you work here?

If no, why not?

If yes, at what? Describe the prison work you do?  
How many hours a day do you work? How many days a week?  
How much do you earn? Explain?  
Would/Do you like to work?  
Why?  
What work would you like to do?  
Tell me, what interests you?  
What motivates you?  
Who do you admire? Why?

### **The Experience of Prison**

Were you in the old female prison? Tell me about it.  
Were you in the move to the new prison? Tell me about it.  
Tell me about the new prison.  
Tell me about coming into the prison  
Were you stripped searched?  
Did you mind?  
How often would you estimate that you have been strip searched?  
Has a male prison officer ever, for any reason, stripped you?  
Tell me about being searched in the prison  
In prison have you ever been on report/P19?  
What for?  
What was the punishment?  
Have you ever been in a Strip Cell? A Padded Cell?  
Tell me about it?  
Have the prison authorities ever threatened to send you to Limerick Prison?  
How likely is it that you will commit crime again after your release?  
How likely do you think it is that you will be back in prison at some time?

Why do you think this?

Tell me about meal times in the prison

Tell me about your routine in the prison

Tell me about leisure time in the prison

Tell me about events in the prison

Tell me about relationships in the prison

Tell me about the different groups in the prison

Sounds in the prison

Sights in the prison

How long have you been here now?

Does it get casier or harder as time goes by?

Tell me about life here.

What is the worst thing about prison?

Tell me about life outside while you are here.

Have you been out on TR since you arrived?

When?

For how long?

Have you ever refused TR?

Why?

When will you go on TR again, do you think?

Have you been to any other prisons on this sentence?

Which prisons?

Tell me about that.

Have you ever been in the Central Mental Hospital?

Tell me about it.

If you have a complaint, how do you make it?

What happens, generally?

Are you satisfied with this process?

What might be done to change this?

How many visits did you get last month?

How many letters?



How many phone calls?

Any issues?

Any issues in communication generally, with each other, with staff, with the outside?

**Well-being in Prison**

When did/do you see a Doctor?

When, if ever, did you see a psychiatrist?

When, if ever, did you see a therapist?

When, if ever, did you see a Probation and Welfare Officer?

Tell me about sex and sexuality in the prison?

Would you describe yourself as straight, gay or bi-sexual?

Tell me about surveillance in the prison.

Have you ever hurt yourself?

Cutting?\Suicide, contemplated/attempted?

Tell me about it

Do you sleep well in here?

Tell me about that/how much sleep?

Has another prisoner ever physically assaulted you?

Have you ever physically assaulted another prisoner?

Has a prisoner officer ever physically assaulted you?

Have you ever physically assaulted a prison officer?

Has another prisoner ever sexually assaulted you?

Have you ever sexually assaulted another prisoner?

Has a prisoner officer ever sexually assaulted you?

Have you ever sexually assaulted a prison officer?

Has another prisoner ever bullied you?

Have you ever bullied another prisoner?

Has a prison officer ever bullied you?

Have you ever bullied a prison officer?

Tell me about the other prisoners.

Tell me about the prison officers.

Would you confide in a prison officer?

Why/Why not?

Tell me about the Governors.

Do you feel safe here?

Are you treated well here?

Tell me about that?

Is the prison a refuge for you?

A refuge from what?

Do you know about the Visiting Committee?

If you know about them have you ever asked to meet them?

Have you ever met them?

Why?/ Why not?

What happened?

Tell me about the food?

What height are you?

What weight are you?

Would you like to lose weight?

Are you trying to lose weight?

What are the most upsetting aspects of prison?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

What services and/or facilities would you most like to see provided?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

Tell me about prejudice in the prison

Who are your friends in the prison?

### **Drugs**

Do you smoke?

When free do you drink alcohol?

What and how much?

Do you use prescription drugs?

Tell me about that.

Have you ever used Cannabis? How much? A little \_\_\_\_, Regularly \_\_\_\_, Daily \_\_\_\_.

Have you used Cannabis in prison? \_\_\_\_\_ Have you used Cannabis in prison this time? \_\_\_\_\_

How much? A little \_\_\_\_, Regularly \_\_\_\_, Daily \_\_\_\_.

Have you ever used any other drug in prison?

Tell me about it

What age were you when you first used Cannabis?

Tell me about drugs in your life, what you used and when you used them.

Why do you think you started to use them?

What happened to make you continue?

What would make you stop?

When did you first use Heroin? Opiates? When did you last use? \_\_\_\_\_ In prison? \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you use? \_\_\_\_\_ In prison? \_\_\_\_\_ This time? \_\_\_\_\_

In the old female prison? In the new female prison?

Normal source of drugs in prison?

Describe frequency of drug use in past month?

Have you ever overdosed? Tell me about it.

Have you gone through detox?

How many times have you gone through detox in prison?

Did you go through detox this time in prison?

Are you on maintenance?

Are you receiving any counseling/therapy?

Have you done any one-to-one therapy? Any group therapy?

Were any of these treatments of use to you?

Is there any connection between your drug use and the crimes you have committed?

Do members of your family misuse drugs? Your friends?

Are there any other services you would like to see in prison in terms of helping you deal with this, or anything else?

Do you intend to give up drugs?

When?

How soon after release will you take drugs/ prescription drugs/ alcohol again?

**The Media and Female Imprisonment**

Have you been featured in the media?

Press or other?

Tell me about it

Have you been mentioned in the newspapers in connection with your case?

Tell me about that

How do you feel about press coverage of women in prison

How does it effect you?

How does it effect the other women?

Does it effect the prison, the atmosphere, environment?

How?

**Social Geography**

	<b>Birth to 12 years</b>	<b>12 – 16 years</b>	<b>21 – 25 years</b>	<b>25 – 30 years</b>	<b>30 – 40 years</b>	<b>40 – 50 years</b>	<b>50 – 60 years</b>
Where did you live? With whom? Type of accomm How many rooms?  How many people  Did you have a b'room?  Did you share it? With whom?  Who were your friends?  Where did they live? Outline your pass times Were you happy?  School? Where? Did you like it? Why? Job? Doing what? Wages? What did you spend it on? Did you feel safe?							

Tell me about your travels?

Had you ever owned a bicycle

A car?

Tell me about it

Have you ever been on a bus \_\_\_ train \_\_\_ boat? \_\_\_ airplane \_\_\_ other? \_\_\_

Tell me about these trips

When you are out of prison, whom do you visit?

Why?

How, what kind of transport do you have to use to visit them?

When you are out, where would you generally go shopping?

What do you do on nights out?

Do you ever go away for a weekend?

Where would you go?

Who would you go with?

For a night out?

For a weekend away?

Have you ever been away on holiday?

Tell me about it?

### **Your Life**

How much control do you have over your life?

Tell me about your role

Tell me about your responsibilities.

Tell me about risk-taking behaviour/impulsive/compulsive behaviour.

Tell me about intimacy?

Tell me about being angry?

Tell me what, if anything, makes you violent?

What do you think of the women in here?

What do you think the general public thinks of the women in here?

### **A Woman in Prison Space**

How many prisons have you been in?

How many prison cells have you been in?

Tell me about them?

How did you feel the first time you came in here?

How do you feel now?

Tell me about being a woman.

About being a woman in here.

Tell me about becoming a prisoner, the stages you go through?

Are you yourself in here or are you playing a role?

If you're playing a role, what role and why?

Tell me about your personal private space in here.

Do you have enough space?

Do you have enough time?

How much time have you spent in prison?

### **The Future**

What are your main concerns leaving here?

What are your plans for when you leave prison?

Do you have anyone to go to, to help you, when you leave prison?

Where will you live?

(Complete the sentence) When I leave prison I will

What choices do you believe you have?

What do you think being in prison has done for you?

How have you improved?

How have you disimproved?

Has anyone helped you move away from prison while you have been here?

What would help you to move away from prison?

## **Appendix Six**

### **Photo-Elicitation Interview Schedule**

Your experiences of prison space

Your experiences of this room

The photographs

The artifacts depicted in the photographs

Experiences of control



## Appendix Seven – Historical Data

### Table Four: Crimes of Felons

Receiving Stolen Goods	173
Having Base Coin in Possession	11
Uttering Base Coin	3
Deserting her child	1
Assaults Violent	5
Assaults Common	322
Having Goods in Possession	872
Wilful Trespass	104
Pawning Illegally	54
Selling Spirits Unlicensed	23
Beggars	3121
Drunkards	3974
Lunatics	55
	11402

### Table 1: Offences with which the Women had been charged (1849)

For Trial	13
For Examination	13
Felons Convicted	61
In possession of stolen goods	72
Assaults	12
Wilful Trespass	1
Stealing Spirits Unlicensed	1
Misdemeanants	97
Beggars under Vagrant Act	111
Drunkards	6
Lunatics under the Act	66
	453

**Table 2: Occupations of the Women (1849)**

Sewing	60	Laundry	41
Cooking	4	Knitting	18
Cleaning	29	Nursing	20
In Hospital	18	In Solitary	1
In Reception Ward	17	Beggars	111
Lunatics	66	Unemployed	68
		Total	453

**Appendix Eight**  
**A Synopsis of female incarcerations in Kilmainham Jail 1799 - 1881**

Year	Total No of Prisoners	Total No Males	Total No Females	Total Under 15s	Inf	Pros	CHR	CB	CR	LO	SUI	VA	Trans	Exe
1799	378	345	33	NR	-	-	-	-	2	2	-		18	8
1800	395	345	50	NR	-	-	-	-	12	6	-		1	6
1801	309	268	41	NR	-	-	-	-	13	-	-		6	9
1802	295	235	60	NR	-	-	2	-	21	2	-		54	6M 1F
1803	277 119 P	247	30	NR	-	-	-	-	11	-	-		5	6 + 2 P
1804	191 191 P	170	21	NR	-	-	-	-	5	-	-		2	2
1805	353	297	56	NR	-	-	-	-	13	1	-		28 + 5 P	-
1806	335	292 + 10 French	33	NR	-	-	-	-	9	3	-		-	6
1807	339	297	42	NR	-	-	-	-	-	1	-		-	9
1808	272	233	38	1	-	-	-	-	12	-	-		29	9
1809	242	216	26	NR	-	-	-	-	9	-	-		8	6
1810	271	234	37	NR	-	-	-	-	5	-	-		48M 4F	2
1811	264	227	37	NR	-	-	-	-	10	4	-		9 M 1 F	3
1812	390	349	41	NR	-	-	-	-	7	-	-		75	8
1813	435	390	45	NR	1	-	-	-	9	1	1		110	4
1814	408	375	33	NR	1	-	1	-	6	1	-		103	2
1815	516	482	34	NR	1	-	-	-	16	1	-		185	6
1816	753	688	65	NR	-	-	-	-	21	-	-		114	11
1817	866	781	85	NR	-	2	2	-	39	9	-		254	7
1818	1092	998	94	NR	1	1	-	-	51	4	-		433	4
1819	733	662	71	NR	1	-	-	-	66	8	-		193	1
1820	767	696	71	NR	-	1	-	-	60	3	-		295	8
1821	776	667	99	10	1	-	-	-	31	5	-		220	2
1822	848	755	84	9	-	-	-	1	54	4	-		100	-
1823	656	574	77	5	2	-	-	1	41	4	-		264	1
1835	764	579	164	21	5	3	1	4	59	6	6		83	0
1836	1210	847	316	47	-	43	4	2	72	-	-		200	0
1837	1027	792	217	18	1	47	4	2	66	5	-		49	-
1843	1369	862	425	82	-	66	1	-	73	-	7		15 M 7 F	-
1844	1363	862	425	82	-	37	6	2	65	-	12		24	-

1845	1340	1024	241	75	-	74	-	-	68	-	7		14 M 3 F	-
1846	1329	821	444	64	1	88	9	-	81	-	12		14	-
1847	2215	1445	667	103	3	64	6	-	68	-	9		23	-
1848	4665	NR	NR	NR	2	212	13	-	102	242	6	193 0	26	-
1849	6888	NR	NR	NR	1	113	8	-	134	178	3	467 3		
1850	9052	NR	NR	NR	1	78	3	4	200	153	5	678 4	31	-
1851	2064	1178	793	134	1	256	16	1	185	178	1	30	12 M 2 F	-
1852	1840	1003	779	58	-	160	12	1	154	154 1	8	15	33 M 4 F	-
1853	2591	956	608	91	1	70	8	-	99	36	2	6	18	-
1854	1692	873	735	84	-	166	6	-	135	51	4	7	-	-
1855	1126	593	468	65	-	92	5	-	74	17	6	2	-	-
1856	979	504	439	36	2	43	4	2	67	23	8	1	2	-
1857	943	543	373	27	-	55	2	2	101	35	4	1	-	-
1858	548	315	233	NR	-	62	9	2	54	23	11	2	-	-
1859	835	429	383	23	3	62	3	1	47	6	12	-	-	-
1860	695	380	294	21	-	31	8	4	44	15	5	-	-	-
1861	789	431	334	24	-	50	1	1	59	27	7	-	-	-
1862	839	517	293	29	1	40	10	1	69	28	3	4	-	-
1863	831	488	321	22	-	31	5	1	41	16	4	3	-	-
1864	812	463	319	30	-	68	3	-	63	9	12	-	-	-
1865	905	510	359	36	-	44	7	1	66	9	7	2	-	-
1866	994	779	177	38	1	42	3	-	51	27	3	-	-	-
1867	1077	794	258	25	-	22	4	1	57	11	2	-	-	-
1868	855	495	316	44	-	22	3	3	50	10	9	1	-	-
1869	933	567	319	47	1	7	2	-	67	32	6	1	-	-
1870	960	586	327	47	1	16	3	-	53	23	5	-	-	-
1871	846	524	271	51	-	12	4	3	35	28	6	-	-	-
1872	810	512	265	33	-	9	-	-	43	19	6	1	-	-
1873	1008	667	297	44	-	15	-	3	54	14	6	-	-	-
1874	985	701	255	29	-	10	3	3	46	14	5	6	-	-
1875	938	655	260	23	-	4	3	1	41	7	12	67	-	-
1876	1985	726	250	33	2	16	2	-	36	26	8	86	-	-
1877	1867	1087	736	44	1	8	7	1	40	14	3	45	-	-
1878	2048	1238	767	43	1	14	3	2	34	32	8	38	-	-
1879	1844	1201	611	32	-	9	4	4	37	3	5	56	-	-
1880	1702	1085	587	30	-	22	9	2	41	59	10	111	-	-
1881	1593	1371	197	25	1	2	4	1	39	49	5	73	-	-

The last female prisoner left Kilmainham Jail May 24<sup>th</sup> 1881. Women were not held again at Kilmainham Jail until the Republican women prisoners were incarcerated there. Prisoners were imprisoned Kilmainham Jail for a broad range of offences. The offences detailed here are offenses that might have a gender dimension. Murder and highway robbery were deemed capital offences. In 1878 three people were imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail for making slides and throwing snowballs in the street. The last woman imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail was imprisoned for knocking on doors and running away.

Code = NR – Not Recorded Inf – Infanticide Pros – Prostitution CHR – Child Related CB – Concealed Birth CR – Clothes related Lo – Loitering SUI – Suicide V – Vagrancy (All begging was to be recorded as vagrancy from 1848) Trans – Transportation Exc - Execution

## Appendix Nine

### Average Daily No of Women in Prison 1930 – 2000

Prisons	1930	1935	1940	1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Cork	58.38	54.9 4	12.2 5												
Dundalk	3.61	5.52													
Galway	22.08														
Limerick	48.04	61.7 3	65.3 7	19.8 9	7.84	5.03	3.89	3.14	2.57	6	10	17		7	12
Mountjoy	254.2	315. 73	276. 95	73.0 5	42.1 3	20.1 6	6.77	14.9 5	10.9 6	20	18	29		32	85
Sligo	33.35	34.4 6	20.8 5	1.46	1.46										
Waterford	32.63	6.23													
Port Laois	128.6 5	100. 23	70.1 1	51.4 3	51.4 3	25.1 9	10.6 6								
Total	580.9 4	578. 84	445. 33	145. 83	102. 86	50.3 8	21.3 2	18.0 9	13.6 3	26	28	46			

**Appendix 10  
Prison Industries**

1930	1945	1950	1975	1980	1985	1990
Agriculture	Bagmaking	Agriculture	Agriculture	Farming and Horticulture	Farms and Gardens	Bakery
Baking	Matmaking	Baking	Baking	AnCo	Catering CERT	Braille
Basket-making	Woodcutting	Cabinet Making	Carpentry and Joinery	Work Projects in the Community	AnCo	Concrete Products
Woodcutting	Laundry Work*	Carpentry and Smithing	Laundry*	Design and Manufacture	PACE	Carpentry/Joinery
Mailbag-making	Tailoring	Mailbag making and repairs	Mailbag Manufacture	Industrial Training	National Manpower Service	Engraving
Mat making	Shoemaking	Matmaking	Matmaking	General Engineering	Metal Fabrication	Fabrics
Shoe making	Weaving	Pig feeding	Printing	Upholstery Work	Manufacturing	Farm/Agriculture
Tailoring	Baking	Shoemaking	Shoemaking	Manufacturing	Manufacture and Training Unit for Knitting Garments	Horticulture
Weaving	Needlework*	Tailoring	Tailoring	Metal Work	Woodwork	Knitting*
Knitting*		Weaving	Tomato Growing		Printing	Leather
Laundry*		Woodcutting	Woodcutting		Braille	Metal Work
		Needlework*	Needlework*		Craftwork*	Printing
						Shoe Repair
						Soft Toys*
						Upholstery
						Tailoring

Asterix indicates work opportunities available in female prisons







Loitering										1				
Offences under the fisheries Act										2				
Drunkenness	32 7	250	95	95	10 4	90	76	80	26	22	20	5	3	
Vagrancy	62	36	11	1	30	9	50	11	5					
Begging			21	11 0	15	18	1	46	17	14				
Road Traffic Offences										3	20	18	9	
Dangerous or Drunken Driving											1		2	
Debtors, Sureties, Contempt of Court													7	
Membership of an illegal organisation										2				
Other Offences	40 0	68	11	37	24	12	13	9	15	1	9	31	13	14
Total no. of women committed	99 9	626	29 2	56 9	34 1	22 3	21 2	24 5	16 0		14 8	19 5	15 5	67

Due to changes in record publication, the statistics for 2000 profile prisoners in custody 01.06.'00 rather than the offences of the women were committed for over the period of one year.

**Appendix Twelve**  
**Recidivism Rates**

	1940	1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1981 <sup>1</sup>	1985	1990	1993 <sup>2</sup>
Total Number of Committals	410	660	383	250	240	255	172	208	306	367	437	724
Average Daily in Prison	72	97	51	25	11	18	14	26	23	46	46	44
Total no. Committed Under Sentence	292	569	341	223	212	245	160	176	110	195	155	329
Not previously Committed Under Sentence	67	163	64	33	39	52	59	76	49	113	108	188
Previous 1-5 Prison Sentences	60	182	73	36	39	84	35	45	43	39	28	119
More than 5 Prison Sentences	57	102	92	24	34	19	36	42	11	38	13	20
More than 20 previous prison sentences	108	122	112	130	100	90	30	9 <sup>3</sup>	7	5	6	2

<sup>1</sup> In 1980 the male and female figures were combined, I used the figures for 1981 which separated the male and female figures.

<sup>2</sup> No statistics were published after 1993. No annual prison reports were published from 1994 – 1999. In 2000, the annual reports for 1999 and 2000 were published together. Fewer statistics were published and the statistics published do not document the data as it is represented in the table above. The statistics do establish that in 2001 there were 923 female committals to prison, 322 of them under sentence.

<sup>3</sup> The figures in the Annual Prison Report are out this year by 4.

**Appendix 13**  
**List of Article Titles**

**(Newspaper Articles)**

**Women in Prison**

Six Sunday newspapers were chosen, three broadsheets and three tabloids, over a period of one year and two daily newspapers, one broadsheet and one tabloid over a period of six months. The analysis took place every Sunday for one year, from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 to September 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 and every day from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001 to October 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 respectively.

Ireland on Sunday Ken Fox	02.09.01	'Black Widow's prison pals to be deported'	Photo of "'Devastated' Catherine Nevin"
Evening Herald	27.07.01	'Five years for vicious blade attack'	Photo of "WILSON: Robbery bid"
Irish Times	27.07.01	'Heroin addict jailed for 5 years for slashing New Zealand tourist on the face'	-
Sunday Independent	08.07.01	'Drug 'mules' are just down on their luck'	-
Sunday Tribune Diarmuid Doyle	08.07.01	'A niggling unease in Nevin and Dando cases'	Photo 'Catherine Nevin and Barry George: 'beyond reasonable doubt'?'
Evening Herald Michael Doyle	12.07.01	'South African drugs woman is deported'	Photo 'Ellen Dingann: Pleaded guilty to importing drugs'
Evening Herald John Lawrence	02.07.01	'SCHOOL'S OUT PARTY FOR NEVIN BARBEQUE: Killer enjoys jail bash after finishing hairdressing course'	Photo: 'CATHERINE NEVIN: Serving a life sentence in Mountjoy for the murder of her husband Tom'
Irish Times Olivia Kelleher	27.06.01	'Mother jailed for ignoring litter fines'	-
Evening Herald John Maddock	20.06.01	'Arson woman seeks jail release'	-

Evening Herald Stephen Hayes	12.06.01	'RUMOURS: Convicted killer 'was not let out on temporary release' Nevin jail denial'	Photo: NOT OUT: Prison sources have scotched rumours Nevin got out
Evening Herald Isabel Hurley	14.06.01	'CRY FOR HELP: Doctors found 500 self-inflicted scars on tragic Lynda after she strangled herself 'MY POOR SISTER'S LONELY TORMENT'	Two photos: LOSS: Lynda's sister Lorraine and a women's prison cell
Evening Herald Michael Mulqueen, Security Correspondent	05.04.01	'EMBARRASSMENT: New 12m prison is too small FIFTY-SIX WOMEN CONVICTS FREED	-
Evening Herald Neal Ellis 'On the Town'	05.04.01	'Dramatic escapism brings joy behind bars'	Photo: SMILES; Lisa Sutherland and John Tomkins star in the Mountjoy Play
Evening Herald Nicola Anderson	11.06.01	'SOLEMN VOW: Soon to retire top cop Jim makes a parting promise...'We will catch poor Raonaid's Killer'	Photo images: Top cop: Retiring Assistant Garda Commissioner Jim McHugh, has presided over high-profile investigations, including (from top left) John Gilligan, Catherine Nevin, Raonaid Murray, and Imelda Riney
Evening Herald	06.06.01	Reform girls to be separated by age	-
Irish Times	14.02.01	Five years' jail for drug courier	-
Irish Times	17.05.01	Woman arrested cannabis seized	-
Evening Herald Anne Jones	09.05.01	SWOOP AT AIRPORT: Heroin abuse was a scourge and had appalling consequences, says judge Drugs girl jailed	Photo: RACHEL DUNNE: Was human tester for drugs dealer
Irish Times	09.05.01	Drugs case woman used as 'human tester'	-
Evening Herald	13.06.01	Woman is charged with sex assault	-
Irish Times	12.06.01	Woman detained at airport	-
Irish Times	040601	Woman held after cannabis seized	-
Evening Herald	31.05.01	Sunday stabber who confessed to wanting to 'kill someone' has sentence adjourned.	-

Evening Herald Michael Mulqueen, Security Correspondent	31.05.01	PREGNANT KILLER DEIRDRE SPENDS LONELY 21 <sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY IN MOUNTJOY Rose 'doesn't seem to know she's doing life'	Photo: CONVICTED KILLER: Deirdre Rose was found guilty of the murder of John Carroll in December 1998
Sunday World	27.05.01	KILLER NEVIN IS JUST WILDE ABOUT OSCAR 'Gaol' ode tops her passion for his poetry	Photos and images: KILLER: Nevin laps up Wilde's poetry as she languishes in Mountjoy prison
Evening Herald Michael Mulqueen, Michael Mulqueen	25.05.01	KILLER MUM'S SECRET PAST CALLOUS CRIME: Anorexic Deirdre Rose seen as almost simple in her hometown	Photo: HYSTERICAL AFTER VERDICT: Friends fear for pregnant Deirdre Rose as she is parted from her daughter Chantal (18 months) to serve a life sentence for her part in the callous murder of deaf John Carroll
Evening Herald Michael Mulqueen	25.05.01	JUST CAN'T COPE: Suicidal, anorexic and backward Deirdre is in despair as she begins a life sentence for the murder of John Carroll	Photo: Evil participation in murder: Pregnant Deirdre Rose
Evening Herald Eugene Hogan and Michael Mulqueen	24.05.01	How did she get so cruel?	Photo: EVIL: Mum-to-be Deirdre Rose (left) was found guilty of the murder of John Carroll (right)
Irish Times	24.05.01	Co Clare woman is sentenced to life for murder	Photo: Deirdre Rose (20) from Killaloe, Co Clare, leaving Dublin's Central Criminal Court yesterday where she was found guilty of murdering John Carroll of Co Limerick in December 1998. Mr Justice Carney sentenced her to life in prison.
Irish Times	23.05.01	Murder accused told gardai she 'didn't do it'	Photo: Ms Deirdre Rose: accused of murdering man beaten to death
Evening Herald Michael Doyle	23.05.01	Woman held on stab rap	Photo: REMANDED: Kathleen Joyce who pleaded guilty to assault at a shopping centre in Clonsilla

Evening Herald	22.05.01	'Dying man begged for help but I looked away'  Accused said 'I didn't kill him''	Photo: ACCUSED OF MURDER: Deirdre Rose (20) (above) refused a deaf man's desperate pleas for help before a savage beating which killed him, a court was heard. She denies the charge. Rose: Statement said she was in car during attack
Evening Herald	220501	Psychiatric report called for on woman who stabbed shopper in suburban supermarket	-
The Sunday Business Post	20.05.01	Gardai in Nevin case prepare to sue garda authorities	Photo: Judge Donnchadh O Buachalla
The Irish Times	280401	Mother of five appeals for release	-
Sunday World Joanne McElgunn	29.04.01	Mum sent to jail had been breastfeeding	Photo: Out: Olivia got compassionate leave from prison
Evening Herald	21.04.01	Teenage girl is jailed to prevent suicide	-
Sunday World Joann McElgunn	1.04.01	Devil Killer Widower is afraid even to go for a game of bingo as deranged woman who slashed his wife to death is released from her mental hospital	Photo: Devil killer let loose
Sunday World Damien Lane	01.04.01	BUSTY TV LAP DANCER IS SISTER OF 'JOY ESCAPEE' We've nothing to do with her says blond who pole-danced topless on documentary	Photo: ON RUN: McGovern, right, who walked out of Mountjoy carrying her baby brother and, inset, lapdancing sister, Sonia
Ireland on Sunday	25.02.01	Jailing more women	-
Sunday World Damien Lane	18.02.01	NEVIN AND THE KILLER TRAVELLER Catherine is devastated as fellow husband murderer is released from prison THE TRAVELLER WHO BECAME NEVIN'S FAIRY GODMOTHER	Photos: NEVIN: Found a friend in fellow killer Bridie Bridie: Served 14 years of a life sentence PRISON PAL: Nevin became close

		Catherine is left depressed as she says 'bye bye Bridie' when jail 'minder' is freed	friends with Bridie 'FAIRY GODMOTHER': Nobody messed with husband killer Bridie Doran in the Women's Prison
Sunday Tribune Rachel Andrews	11.02.01	Care officer not prosecuted over sex charges	-
Sunday Independent Jerome Reilly	08.10.00	Final curtain falls on the Nevin tragedy	Cartoon Photo: END OF STORY: Michael Murphy and Vincent Wheland (on left, above), who withdrew allegations about Judge O'Buachalla and Catherine Nevin
Sunday World Joanne McElgunn	15.10.00	Nevin 'unlikely' to win appeal	Photo: CATHERINE NEVIN: Appealing conviction
Sunday World Liam Reid	15.10.00	It's zero recognition for the government but most of you could identify a killer WOULD YOU KNOW NEVIN?	Photo: INFAMY: an astonishing 84 per cent of people recognise Catherine Nevin but only two out of 10 could name Minister Michael Woods (left)
News of the World Gary O'Shea	19.08.01	BLACK WIDOW IN JAIL ATTACK HORROR Evil Nevin beaten up for informing on drug dealer Drugs queen batters Black Widow Nevin as she squeals in Aids panic	ATTACKED: NEVIN MURDER SCENE: Pub where Nevin's hubby was shot dead BANGED UP: Nevin was attacked in Mountjoy Prison BEATEN UP: Murderess Nevin was punched by fellow inmate after prison Aids scare ASSAILKANT: Drug pusher Felloni hit out after Nevin got her reprimanded by warders
Sunday Tribune Helen Murray	19.08.01	15-year-old-girl detained in Mountjoy as 'last resort	-

Sunday World Joanne McElgunn	29.10.00	LOVE, HATE AND DEATH <u>What drives a husband or wife to kill a partner when marriage turns to bitterness?</u>	GREED: Tom Nevin was killed for money by his wife Catherine
News of the World Nick Bramhill	05.11.00	GHOULS FLOCK TO BLACK WIDOW PUB Staff like the punters, but not their puns	DOOMED: Tom with his evil wife Catherine outside Jack Whites. She hired a hitman to kill him so she could pick up f1 million
Sunday World Alan Croghan	19.11.00	'Prisoners are just ordinary human beings who have made mistakes' <u>Caring approach of the Governor who runs the toughest prison in the country</u>	INNOCENT: Nora Wall KILLERS: Catherine Nevin and Malcolm McArthur THE GOVERNOR: John Lonergan is renowned for his compassionate approach to prisoners
Sunday World Declan Power and Joanne McElgunn	26.11.00	PLEASE FREE MY WIFE.....I CAN'T COPE WITH 14 KIDS ON MY OWN <u>Traveller coughs up bail cash to get dog fight mum released</u>	FREED: Margaret Connors is now out of Mountjoy PLEAS: Fat Jimmy Connors
The Sunday Tribune Catherine Cleary	17.12.00	Catherine Nevin seeks legal aid for appeal	-
Sunday World Hugh Ormond	17.12.00	NEVIN BIDDING FOR A CUT IN SENTENCE <u>Black Widow seeks legal aid for appeal</u>	NEVIN: Shes going back to court to try and get her sentence reduced
Sunday World Damien Lane and Cathal O'Shea	24.12.00	NEVINS'S KILLERS TO BE NAMED NEVIN KILLERS SET TO BE UNMASKED Appeal evidence to point to murderer's identities	EVIDENCE: Nevin has a witness who, she claims, will exonerate her NEVIN: Gunned down KILLER AND HER VICTIM: Catherine Nevin and her husband Tom, who she arranged to have murdered in their pub The BLACK WIDOW: Catherine Nevin



			enjoyed a string of affairs before having her husband killed
Sunday Tribune Catherine Cleary	24.12.00	Prisoners to record books for their children	-
Ireland on Sunday Niamh O'Connor Crime Correspondent	07.01.01	The revolving door was to have close but its still spinning DESPITE MINISTER O'DONOGHUE'S PLAN TO END THE TEMPORARY RELEASE SYSTEM, THE PRACTICE CONTINUES	GUILTY: But Thomas Murray, above, and Regina Felloni, right, were both given a taste of freedom - early
Ireland on Sunday Niamh O'Connor Crime Correspondent	21.01.01	Nevin garda faces pub assault probe	Murphy: Under investigation Judge: Public inquiry Nevin: Convicted murderess
Ireland on Sunday Niamh O'Connor Crime Correspondent	28.01.01	Nevin garda plot thickens	Newspaper images IOS: January 21 Nevin garda faces pub assault charges Irish Indo: January 24 Garda in Nevin case suspended over pub incident

**Appendix 14  
In the Press**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>No of Articles</b>	<b>No of images</b>	<b>No of Journalists</b>	<b>Word Count Range</b>
<b>Evening Herald</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16 - 800</b>
<b>Sunday World</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>70 - 1400</b>
<b>Irish Times</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30 -750</b>
<b>Sunday Tribune</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>70 - 1000</b>
<b>News of the World</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>550 - 750</b>
<b>Sunday Independent</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>200 - 650</b>
<b>Ireland on Sunday</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100 - 400</b>
<b>Sunday Business Post</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>300 - 400</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>26</b>	

**Appendix 14  
In the Press**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>No of Articles</b>	<b>No of images</b>	<b>No of Journalists</b>	<b>Word Count Range</b>
<b>Evening Herald</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16 - 800</b>
<b>Sunday World</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>70 - 1400</b>
<b>Irish Times</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30 -750</b>
<b>Sunday Tribune</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>70 - 1000</b>
<b>News of the World</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>550 - 750</b>
<b>Sunday Independent</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>200 - 650</b>
<b>Ireland on Sunday</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100 - 400</b>
<b>Sunday Business Post</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>300 - 400</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>26</b>	

Appendix 15  
The Women Featured

	<b>Name of Woman</b>	<b>Newspaper Description</b>	<b>No of Art.</b>	<b>No of Images</b>
1	<b>Catherine Nevin</b>	<b>Black Widow</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>
2	<b>Deirdre Rose</b>	<b>Heartless Killer</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
3	<b>Regina Felloni</b>	<b>Heroin Dealer 24 year old daughter DCF</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
4	<b>Bridie Doran</b>	<b>Traveller Husband Murderer</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
5	<b>Rachel Dunne</b>	<b>Drugs girl Human tester</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
6	<b>Kathleen Joyce</b>	<b>Sunday Stabber</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
7	<b>Ellen Dingann</b>	<b>Pregnant South African Hairdresser</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
8	<b>Lisa Sutherland</b>	<b>Dramatic escapism</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
9	<b>Debbie Wilson</b>	<b>Heroin addict prostitute slashes tourists face</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
10	<b>Carol Anne Dunne</b>	<b>Devil Killer</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
11	<b>Melody McGovern</b>	<b>Joy Escapee with lap dancing sister</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
12	<b>Nora Wall</b>	<b>The rapist nun</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
13	<b>Margaret Connors</b>	<b>The dog-fight bookie mum</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
14	<b>Lynda Byrne</b>	<b>Lonely Lynda Suicide in prison</b>	<b>1</b>	
15	<b>Zulpha Gasant</b>	<b>Suicidal, psychiatric South African woman</b>	<b>1</b>	
16	<b>Sandra Condon</b>	<b>Campaigner/Household services charges</b>	<b>1</b>	
17	<b>Olivia Mackey</b>	<b>Mother of five</b>	<b>1</b>	
18	<b>Mary Murphy</b>	<b>Arson woman</b>	<b>1</b>	
19	<b>15 year old girl</b>	<b>Imprisoned for own good</b>	<b>1</b>	
	<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>

## Appendix Sixteen

### Home Address – Women Currently in Prison

Dublin	135	Manchester	2
Kildare	7	London	3
Bray	9	Sweden	1
Kerry	1	South Africa	17
Louth	6	Poland	3
Cavan	3	Albania	3
Navan	4	Nigeria	16
Offaly	5	Zimbabwe	1
Cork	6	Lithuania	3
Meath	7	Italy	1
West Meath	26	Guatemala	10
Galway	13	Budapest	4
Mayo	5	Iraq	38
Limerick	3	China	22
Longford	12	Ukraine	47
Donegal	3	Tanzania	22
Carlow	7	Estonia	11
Dundalk	2	Ghana	4
Waterford	58	Romania	8
Sligo	5	Japan	2
Wicklow	8	Bulgaria	1
Glen of the Downes	54	Portugal	25
Belfast	5	Spain	37
Monaghan	7	Scotland	5
Athy	3	Czech Republic	2
Down	12	Congo	2
Roscommon	3	Malaysia	1
Kilkenny	1	France	1
Laoise	2	Ivory Coast	1
Athlone	2	Russia	1
Drogheda	13	Ethiopia	1

Tipperary	2
Hostel	7
Traveller Site	13
Simon Community	2

Brazil	18
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(n=751)

## Appendix Seventeen

### Listed Data - Range of offences

#### Women Imprisoned Mountjoy Prison 2000 – 2001

Failure to appear	23	Forgery	5
Money Laundering	2	Casual Trading	3
Casual Trading, Drunk,			
Breach of the Peace	1	Assault on Garda	11
Possession of False Prescription		Stealing property, robbery	
Stealing Property	1	assault, fail to appear	1
Possession of drugs	16	Handle stolen property	33
Alien	73	Larceny, stealing property	9
Danger to self, public order	2	Stolen property, extradition	1
Road Traffic Act	11	Breach bail	35
Possession of drugs with			
intent to supply	13	Road Traffic Act, stealing	1
Abusive words, breach bail	1	Malicious damage	3
Fraud	6	Handle stolen property,	
Failure to produce ID,		Possession of drugs	1
begging in a public place,		Stealing property	77
fail to comply with Garda		Debt	3
direction	1	Money laundering	1
Trespass and larceny	3	Breach of peace	8
Possession of drugs,		Assault, possession of a	
obstructing a Garda	2	weapon, damage property	1
Passenger in a stolen car,		Road Traffic Act, assault	1
Interference with electrical		Breach bail	3
Meter, trespass, breach bail	1	Illegal trading	2
Soliciting, contempt of		Possession of controlled	
court	1	drug	1
Robbery	10	Possession of controlled	
Vagrancy	6	drugs, fail to appear	1
Fail to appear	1	Damage property	5
Assault	29	Possession of a knife	8
Breach of peace, harassment	1	Fraud and forgery	1
Steal property	16	Prostitution	2
Loitering, Road Traffic Act	1	Trespass	6
Breach bail, stealing, breach			
Barring order	1	Breach bail, abusive words,	
Debtor	2	fail to appear	1

Possession with intent to supply, loitering with intent to solicit	1	Steal drugs, damage property	1
Fail to appear, soliciting	1	Danger to self, breach peace	1
Forgery, assault	1	No ticket, public service vehicle	2
Larceny	50	Stealing, handle stolen property	4
Litter/pollution	1	Possession of heroin	1
Handle stolen property, steal Property, breach bail	2	Damage property, false calls to 999	1
Arson	1	Possession of cannabis, larceny	1
Parking double yellow lines	1	Larceny, trespass, damage Property, assault on Garda	1
No insurance, no tax	1	Steal property, carried in stolen car	1
Assault, stealing property possession of drugs	1	No TV license	1
Steal, attempt to steal, breach of peace	1	Danger to self	5
Fail to comply with Garda, fail to appear	1	Possession of drugs, steal property, forgery, fail to appear	1
Robbery, larceny, breach Bail	1	Soliciting	21
No Insurance	12	Breach bail, larceny	2
Loitering	3	Assault and stealing	1
Breach of protection order	1	Possession of knife, assault	1
Fail to comply with Garda	1	Possession of drugs, steal Property	1
Handle stolen property, Forgery, bail	1	Steal property, handle stolen Property, possession of knife larceny	1
Danger to traffic	1	Casual trading non payment of excise	8
Steal property, steal from person	1	Assault, possession of cannabis to supply	1
Obstruction of Revenue, non payment of excise	1	Rob from person	4
Assault, assault on Garda, possession of knife	1	Breach bail, steal property	8
Unlawfully at large, steal Property, breach peace	1	Breach barring order, criminal damage	2
Rob car, unlawfully at large	1	Assault Garda, breach bail	2
Steal	2	Contempt of court	8
Steal property, handle stolen Property, steal from person	1	Failure to produce CTL	1
Steal property, fail to appear	2	Fail to display tax	2



Damage property	2	Non payment of excise	1
Murder	2	Handle stolen clothing	2
Breach safety order	1	Begging in a public place	4
Fail to appear, breach bail, larceny	1	Assault and trespass	1
Steal property, fail to pay bus ticket	1	Failure to keep foodstall in proper repair	1
Robbed car, larceny, handle Stolen property	1	Begging, public order act, fail to comply	1
Steal property, possession of drugs	2	TW	2
Attempt to rob	2	Fail to appear, steal property	2
Larceny, attempt to steal, Handle stolen property, steal property	1	Assault, breach bail	2
Steal property, possession of a knife	1	Assault causing harm	1
Illegal trading, domestic violence	1	Larceny, handle stolen property	3
Begging	2	No tax, no insurance	1
Failure to produce ID	1	Public order	1
Possession of a knife, fail to Appear	1	Solicit to murder, murder	1
Hold unauthorised collection	1	Passenger in stolen car, steal property	2
Begging, steal property	1	Parking fines	1
Begging, breach bail	1	Possession of a foil lined bag	2
Begging in a public place, allowing child to beg	1	TW, larceny	2
Laundering drugs money	1	Forgery, passenger in stolen car	1
Breach bail, handle stolen Property, passenger in stolen Car	1	Violent, disorderly behaviour	1
Drunk and disorderly	2	Domestic violence	2
Larceny, assault, criminal Damage, breach bail, insulting behaviour	1	Possession of cocaine	1
Fail to appear, larceny, Entering MPV, larceny	1	obstructing a Garda	1
TW, attempt to steal from Person	1	Larceny, breach bail	2
		Fail to appear, larceny	1
		Possession of drugs, disorderly conduct	1
		Breach bail, insulting behaviour	1
		Possession of foil lined bag steal property, larceny	1
		Robbery, breach bail	2
		Steal property, fail to comply, breach bail	2

Handle stolen property,		Nuisance telephone calls	1
contempt court	2	Possession of drugs,	
Casual trading, obstruct		possession of drugs for supply	3
Revenue	1	Drunk, breach bail	1
Forgery and larceny	1	Larceny, UAL	2
Dangerous driving	1	Cause serious harm	1
No dog license	1	Harass a person	1
Steal car	2	Under the influence of	
Assault Garda, assault,		drink/drugs	1
handle stolen property	1	Failing to send child to school!	
Possession of illegal weapon	1	Handle stolen goods	3
Breach peace	2	No tax, larceny, handle	
Illegally import drugs,		stolen goods	1
possession	1	Larceny from person	1
Possession controlled drugs	1	Drive MPV no safety belt	1
Drunk in a public place	5	Drunk and danger to self	5
Breach peace, assault Garda	1	Larceny, handle stolen	
Unstated	1	Property, unspecified offence	1
Robbery, assault causing		Soliciting, assault causing	
harm	1	harm, larceny, breach bail	1
Abusive behaviour	2	Threatening and abusive	
Allowed herself to be		Behaviour	1
carried in a stolen car	1	Assault, breach peace	1
Casual trading, breach peace	1	Possession heroin, intent	
		to supply	1