

RECONSTRUCTING HUNGER: RECOLLECTION
AND RE-PRESENTATION OF THE
1981 HUNGER STRIKE

by

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ABSTRACT

As a pivotal moment in “the Troubles,” various media have portrayed the 1981 hunger strike, including documentary films and print journalism, as well as artistic representations that span from murals and street art to feature-length films. I would like to explore the theoretical framework of a digital archive that will support the complexity of this historical event, both in the content of the material and the cultural issues that arise from addressing a traumatic moment for Northern Irish communities. I approach this project from a humanities perspective to push the boundaries of traditional archival practices while experimenting with developments in the field of digital humanities. I am particularly invested in how systems-level archival construction can foster dynamic (re)readings of the past. I also explore the ethical responsibilities and repercussions of such an archival system. Ideally, this archive will contribute to our understanding of the hunger strike and help illuminate other protests in separate conflicts. However, sociological conditions and the limitations of electronic archives suggest this will be a difficult process.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ARK</i>	Access Research Knowledge
<i>BC</i>	Boston College
<i>CAIN</i>	Conflict Archive on the Internet
<i>CCO</i>	Cataloging Cultural Objects
<i>DCC</i>	Digital Curation Centre
<i>DPNF</i>	Dual-Perspective Navigation Framework
<i>ERM</i>	Electronic Records Management
<i>FLHS</i>	Falls Library Hunger Strike
<i>INCORE</i>	International Conflict Research Institute
<i>INLA</i>	Irish National Liberation Army
<i>IRA</i>	Irish Republican Army
<i>LCSH</i>	Library of Congress Subject Headings
<i>METS</i>	Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard
<i>MNI</i>	Murals of Northern Ireland
<i>MP</i>	Member of Parliament
<i>NIHRC</i>	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
<i>NIO</i>	Northern Ireland Office
<i>OAIS</i>	Open Archival Information System
<i>OC</i>	Officer Commanding
<i>OCLC</i>	Online Computer Library Center

<i>PIRA</i>	Provisional Irish Republican Army
<i>PMA</i>	Prisons Memory Archive
<i>PREMIS</i>	Preservation Metadata: Implementation Strategies
<i>PRONI</i>	Public Records Office of Northern Ireland
<i>PSNI</i>	Police Services of Northern Ireland
<i>PUP</i>	Progressive Unionist Party
<i>TRAC</i>	Trustworthy Repositories Audit & Certification
<i>UVF</i>	Ulster Volunteer Force

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INTRODUCTION

On March 1, 1976, Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) volunteer Kieran Nugent was sentenced to the newly constructed H-Blocks of Her Majesty's Prison Maze/Long Kesh just outside of Lisburn, Northern Ireland. He was the H-Block's first prisoner sentenced during the Northern Ireland Conflict after the British government retracted Special Category Status, which previously classified those charged with "Troubles-related" offenses as political prisoners or prisoners of war (Taylor 203).¹ In its place, the government installed Diplock courts, where the accused faced not a panel of jurors, but a single judge. Nugent was also the first prisoner to go "on the blanket" and protest the requirement to wear a prison uniform; such clothing meant acknowledging the legitimacy of the system that labeled him a common criminal and not a political prisoner. Instead, Nugent wrapped the blanket from his cell's bed around himself, and alongside hundreds of individuals arrested after him, launched the blanket protest.

Two years of blanket protests passed. After no change in prison regime, prisoners began the "no-wash" or "dirty protest" where they refused to leave their cells to bathe or slop out, forcing them to smear excreta on their cell walls. This strategy continued for another two years until January 1980, when prisoners released a statement outlining five demands that constituted their definition of political status: the right not to wear the prison uniform or do prison work, the right of free association and outside visitations, and finally, full restoration of remission lost during the previous years of protests (O'Malley 20-23). When the British government refused to

¹ I use "the Troubles" interchangeably with the "Northern Ireland Conflict," a sectarian and ethno-nationalistic conflict which started in the 1960s and technically ended with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

meet their demands, select prisoners went on hunger strike in October 1980. The PIRA chose seven men from a list of volunteers, a symbolic association to the seven men who signed the 1916 Proclamation during the Easter Rising.² The men also came from and therefore represented different counties, which helped maximize public sympathy throughout Northern Ireland (O’Rawe 91). Two months into the hunger strike, communications between the PIRA command within the prison, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), and London by way of a secret operative (code-named “The Mountain Climber”) revealed that a compromise was on its way to the H-Blocks. At the same time, one of the hunger strikers was slipping in and out of a coma. Former PIRA officer Brendan “The Dark” Hughes trusted that the anticipated compromise would be sufficient, and decided to call off the hunger strike to avoid the unnecessary death of one of his men.³ When documents outlining the negotiation reached the prison, it revealed a vague restatement of the government’s previous position—the words on the page did not reflect a feasible concession (Taylor 233-235).

Realizing the government would not meet their five demands, the protesters acknowledged that any new hunger strike meant certain death and that “if any hesitation to die on the part of the hunger strikers resulted in last-minute vacillation, the campaign in general would be dealt a potentially mortal blow” (O’Rawe 103). At this time, they also introduced a new staggered structure to replace the simultaneous strike of 1980, with each new protester joining the strike a week or so after the previous man started. This increased the strike’s longevity while also placing a moral imperative on the strikers themselves; each man had to watch those that started before him die, creating a more determined motivation to strike to the

² Not all of the chosen seven were in the PIRA; John Nixon was a member of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA).

³ Hughes was the PIRA’s Officer Commanding (OC) within the prison before joining the hunger strike, at which time he designated Bobby Sands as OC. When Sands started the 1981 hunger strike, he similarly stepped down and designated a new OC, Brendan “Bik” McFarlane.

death and not let down his comrades. They also excluded the men on hunger strike from any possible compromise negotiations, correcting the dilemma that Hughes faced months before (O’Rawe 105-106).

The PIRA’s former OC, Bobby Sands, began the 1981 hunger strike on March 1, the same date that Kieran Nugent went “on the blanket” five years prior (Beresford 54). He was the first of 23 men to join the protest, and as the movement’s figurehead, his death led to him becoming an icon of mythological proportions for the republican cause. The nine men who struck to the death after Sands further inspired a narrative of martyrdom in the face of British oppression. The protest collapsed in early October after multiple families intervened and pulled their relatives off the strike.

The hunger strike remains a watershed moment of the Troubles as it sparked several shifts in the republican movement. First, the prisoners essentially received their five demands in October 1981. Additionally, Bobby Sands’ election as MP during his hunger strike established the Provisionals’ democratic counterpart, Sinn Féin, as a major political party in Northern Ireland. And the appointment of Sands’ election agent, Owen Carron, to Westminster after Sands’ death solidified a political component to the movement’s armed struggle.⁴ As public sympathy for the hunger strikers grew north and south of the border, the Provisionals saw an upsurge in membership. Sinn Féin’s “armalite and ballot box” strategy capitalized on the North’s political divide, effectively eliminating any middle ground that other political parties were trying to maintain (Taylor 281-286). Although divisive politics eventually gave way to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the conflict’s legacy of sectarianism continues to shape the political and social landscape of Northern Ireland to this day.

⁴ Sands did not run for MP under Sinn Féin, but as an Anti H-Block candidate. Carron did the same in the August 1981 by-election, but he eventually ran as a Sinn Féin candidate the following year.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As a pivotal moment in the Troubles, various media have portrayed the 1981 hunger strike, including documentary films and print journalism, as well as artistic representations that span from murals and street art to feature-length films. The content of my proposed archive will therefore contain various material types, including:

- Murals / Street art
- Poems
- Plays
- Music
- News coverage
- Feature and documentary films
- Photography
- Prisoner writings
- Illustrations
- Government documents
- Monuments and other public commemorations
- Architectural sites

I would like to explore the theoretical framework of a digital archive that will support the complexity of this historical event, both in the content of the material and the cultural issues that arise from addressing a traumatic moment for Northern Irish communities. I approach this project from a humanities perspective to push the boundaries of traditional archival practices while experimenting with developments in the field of digital humanities. I am particularly invested in how systems-level archival construction can foster dynamic (re)readings of the past. I also explore the ethical responsibilities and repercussions of such an archival system. Ideally, this archive will contribute to our understanding of the hunger strike and help illuminate other

protests in separate conflicts. However, sociological conditions and the limitations of electronic archives suggest this will be a difficult process.

As I demonstrate throughout this thesis, the 1981 hunger strike obscures numerous archival procedures and practices. The psychosocial landscape of Northern Ireland remains precarious, particularly when addressing Troubles-related violence. Understanding how PTSD functions at communal and individual levels is essential, as is establishing archival ethics to appropriately respect a post-conflict community.⁵ Representing nuanced and contradictory perspectives will also challenge the archive's narrative construction. A notable history of contestation regarding the hunger strike as well as the larger conflict persists. In running an extensive propaganda campaign, the PIRA crafted a version of history necessary for the republican movement, and any version of events differing from this narrative (regardless of its accuracy) detracted from the cause. Divergent perspectives publicized recently have sent shockwaves throughout Northern Ireland specifically because they erode these established narratives.⁶ The inclusive collection policy that I envision would incorporate this propaganda narrative, but it would then also require markers to contextualize it. My archival framework also relies on metadata, and Northern Ireland's politicized language will challenge attempts at authority control. Finally, I scrutinize the artistic representations at the core of this archive. Part of my selection and appraisal method will involve an object-level analysis of potential archival materials. One can readily classify a mural of a hunger striker or Steven McQueen's 2008 film, *Hunger*, as relevant for this archive. Yet, the hunger strike has a complex relationship to

⁵ The Troubles reinforced a culture of fear related to the sectarian divide, as well as a reticence around speaking for fear of being labeled an "informer."

⁶ In this regard, I closely analyze Boston College's Belfast Oral History Project and Richard O'Rawe's published accounts of the hunger strike in future sections. The PIRA was not the only group relying on a certain version of events, but I primarily examine the PIRA's established narrative and those that challenge it.

literature, specifically the novel—to date, a novel has yet to represent the protest.⁷ Authors repeatedly address or allude to the hunger strike through geographic and/or temporal distances, and I hope to use the same space/time qualifiers to structure a material appraisal system that articulates an item’s value while providing beneficial context to the archive’s users.

How can information science represent intricate narratives when the words describing a conflict reflect certain political or ideological significations? What are the implications of a project that leans to one side over the other? What if it attempts to be entirely unbiased? How can archival standards capture contested moments of history? And can an outsider to this community create an archive that will reread and reinterpret an iconic, watershed event? Answering these questions will ideally lead to the creation of an archival system that captures, maintains, and contextualizes subjective representations of an ethically and historically complex event.

Before delving into the crux of my archival framework, I first give a brief overview of hunger striking in Ireland. Since this thesis involves interdisciplinary fields, I then review crucial texts in archival theory, sociology, and Irish cultural criticism. Following the literature review, I analyze existing Irish archives before pivoting the social impact of these collections towards the Troubles’ emotional, psychosocial, and physical repercussions. Next, I contextualize the hunger strike through the technical application of descriptive metadata and subject headings, which I further problematize by incorporating history on the Irish language and its politicization. This section also demonstrates the features of archival item annotations and methods to analyze primary and secondary source material. I then question the limitations and possibilities of archival appraisal theories by analyzing a small selection of possible archival materials. Finally, I

⁷ Colum McCann specifically wrote his novella, “Hunger Strike,” to fill this gap. Yet, the plot remains geographically distant from the events of the Maze/Long Kesh Prison.

address the practical and logistical steps that must be implemented before this archive can go live.

HISTORY OF IRISH HUNGER STRIKING

Three months after Sands began his strike, then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher described the “calculated cynicism” behind the IRA’s hunger strike in a speech at Stormont Castle:

Faced with the failure of their discredited cause, the men of violence have chosen in recent months to play what may well be their last card. They have turned their violence against themselves through the prison hunger strike to death. They seek to work on the most basic of human emotions—pity—as a means of creating tension and stoking the fires of bitterness and hatred. (Thatcher, “Speech at Stormont Castle Lunch”)

While PM Thatcher correctly identified pity as a key strategy—the PIRA aggressively exploited public sympathy—her description circumvents the cultural capital the hunger strikers utilized in their campaign. Hunger striking in Ireland is deeply rooted in medieval Irish law, religious martyrdom, literary tradition, and a legacy of political rebellions. By tapping into these long-standing narrative tropes, the hunger strikers recalled Ireland’s traumatic history of conquest in an effort to validate both their authentic Celtic identity and the republican claim to Northern Ireland.

These traditions do not occur independently of one another. Instead, they coalesce within a narrative of nationalistic rebellion. The Irish Literary Revival exemplifies this convergence, specifically in a section of W. B. Yeats’ 1904 play, *The King’s Threshold*. The Irish Renaissance renewed interest in Ireland’s Celtic past since it existed free from colonial Britain’s influence. Popular works typically romanticized versions of ancient Irish myths and folklore as

counterpoints to contemporary British rule, while mobilizing national pride in the Irish cultural consciousness. Yeats was a figurehead in the Revival and the following section from *The King's Threshold* is frequently quoted in hunger strike texts:

KING: ...He has chosen death:
Refusing to eat or drink, that he may bring
Disgrace upon me; for there is a custom,
An old and foolish custom, that if a man
Be wronged, or think that he is wronged, and starve
Upon another's threshold till he die,
The common people, for all time to come,
Will raise a heavy cry against that threshold,
Even though it be the King's. (Yeats 192-193)⁸

Yeats' hunger striker, Seanchan, is an Irish poet and the "old and foolish custom" that he invokes is the *troscad*, a law under the early Irish Brehon legal system. If a petitioner starved himself on another man's doorstep to address a wrongdoing, the law then required the accused to feed the hunger striker or, if the striker refused to eat and starved to death, to compensate his family. In 1920, the British administration in Ireland arrested Lord Mayor of Cork Terence MacSwiney, and he went on a hunger strike to the death to protest the charges. As a poet and a politician, "his martyrdom powerfully engaged with a broad spectrum of tropes that defined Irish nationalist culture" (Reynolds 538). Significantly, in the wake of MacSwiney's hunger strike, Yeats revised the ending of his play, giving his own poet and hunger striker, as he described, a "new tragic

⁸ Numerous texts on the hunger strike feature this section of Yeats' play, typically as part of the book's title or as an epigraph. O'Malley used the phrase "biting at the grave" from an earlier version of this same section (Yeats revised this play numerous times over the years) for the title of his 1990 book on the hunger strike.

ending ... as it suggests the Lord Mayor of Cork” (Kiely liii). In earlier versions, the king bows to Seanchan before handing over his own crown. But the revised version has him, like MacSwiney, striking to the death.

Political hunger striking is not exclusive to Irish nationalist culture, especially in the early twentieth-century. British suffragette Marion Dunlop first went on hunger strike in 1909 to protest the government labeling her a criminal instead of a political prisoner (Vernon 61).⁹ Yet, political hunger striking proliferated throughout the Irish revolutionary period. One of the leaders of the 1916 Rising, James Connolly, went on hunger strike for eight days in 1913; republican Thomas Ashe immediately went on hunger strike after his arrest in 1917 (he died shortly after his incarceration due to complications from force-feeding); Terence MacSwiney’s sister, Mary, also went on hunger strike after her arrest in 1922; and in October 1923, 8,000 men in Dublin’s Mountjoy Jail went on hunger strike, as did many others through the mid-twentieth century (Sweeney 421-428). The Irish Literary Revival helped redeploy an ancient Celtic culture that mythologized the self-sacrificing martyr, and hunger striking as a form of political resistance solidified itself within Irish nationalist tradition.

Importantly, MacSwiney’s hunger strike occurred after the 1916 Easter Rising. In an act of rebellion, republicans overtook several locations in Dublin for almost a week before the British Army overpowered them. British forces then systematically executed the rebellion’s 16 leaders over a period of ten days. Where most citizens opposed the events of the Rising, the grotesque performance of executions unintentionally created waves of support for Ireland’s

⁹ Hunger striking is also not dependent upon nationalist or republican affiliation. During the Troubles, former commander of the Shankill’s Ulster Volunteer Force, Gusty Spence, launched several hunger strikes in 1966 and 1967. In December 1980, six members of the Ulster Defence Association joined the republican hunger strike for the same five demands, with an additional requirement to be segregated from republican prisoners. See Roy Garland’s *Gusty Spence* (2001) and F. Stuart Ross’ *Smashing H-Block: The Rise and Fall of the Popular Campaign against Criminalization, 1976-1982* (2011).

newest fallen martyrs (Jackson 204). Ireland's War of Independence between the IRA and British forces soon followed, lasting three years from 1919 to 1921. Although after MacSwiney's death, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 ended this conflict.¹⁰ During this time, the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 partitioned twenty-six southern counties (which would become the Irish Free State) and a separate territory of six counties in the north, the latter of which remains part of the United Kingdom to this day. In this period of war and rebellion, MacSwiney's highly publicized death provided the republican movement with another martyr of epic proportions:

By internationally distributing images and written accounts of his death and burial, mass culture presented his sacrifice as evidence of Irish victimization at the hands of the English... [T]he Irish heroic corpse not only exposed English oppression, but also consolidated the Irish public. (Reynolds 555)

His death not only identified the English judiciary as perpetrators of crimes against the Irish, but it also helped unite the Irish people. During the Troubles some sixty years later, the PIRA strived to do the same by reenacting this legacy of Irish martyrdom in the face of British colonial rule.

Even though MacSwiney's death and subsequent funerals occurred decades after the Great Famine—long considered the worst horror of British colonization in Ireland—some critics argue that the sight of his emaciated body triggered memories of Ireland's collective starvation and Famine trauma (Lennon 63-64). Hundreds of thousands attended his highly publicized funeral processions in London, Dublin, and Cork. Solemn processions on public thoroughfares brought his trauma to the surface of the Irish social consciousness, even spreading throughout the Irish diaspora that swelled after the Famine (Lennon 72). MacSwiney's temporal proximity to these specters of famine memory directed the message of his hunger strike towards a singular

¹⁰ Despite the War of Independence ending, disagreement over the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty led to a year-long civil war between pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty members of the IRA.

interpretation: in letting MacSwiney die, the English performed the same horrors that saw one million Irish people die of starvation decades earlier.¹¹ Appropriating Famine trauma placed the impetus on the English to concede and therefore, they are therefore solely responsible for his death.

The public widely supported MacSwiney's narrative, but the 1981 hunger strike encountered pushback from both the British state and the hierarchy of the Catholic church. In the above quote, PM Thatcher strongly indicates that she is not responsible for letting anyone die, rather the hunger strikers are violent criminals resorting to self-inflicted harm as a means of emotional exploitation. Likewise, the Catholic Church was more indecisive regarding their role in the 1981 hunger strike than it was in the 1920s. MacSwiney enjoyed vocal support from a large majority of Catholic priests, but Margaret Scull correlates this support to the fact that Ireland was in a state of open rebellion during which "nationalism" and "Catholicism" were interchangeable (Scull 290). In 1981 however, the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland was in a precarious situation as it "needed to operate with political sensitivity to the British government as a minority religious institution" (Scull 290). Scull also suggests that fatigue contributed to reduced support from the Catholic Church during 1981; negotiations during the 1980 hunger strike exhausted several priests, who subsequently felt like pawns manipulated by both the British government and the PIRA. Additionally, by the 1980s, the republican movement had "increased ties with socialism and communism, which the Church inherently feared" (Scull 295). With less support from the Catholic Church, the PIRA relied on a combination of media attention and propaganda to sustain their iteration of Irish martyrdom. This strategy articulated their

¹¹ I revisit the visual power of effectively broadcasting the image of the starving Irish body and discuss its influence as a cross-cultural signifier of collective trauma in "Representational Objects."

narrative of the hunger strike as a performance of martyrdom while simultaneously upending the very construct of the prison.

Martyrdom as both an act and a performance consistently appears throughout the hunger strike tradition, from the *troscad* through the 1980s. The inclusion of Yeats' play in epigraphs, titles, and even contextual analyses on the 1981 hunger strike acknowledges an innate performative element at work. In describing the theatricality of a hunger strike, Sharman Russell conflates hunger's bodily signal for nourishment with the hunger strikers' insistence for political change:

Hunger is a demand, a cry, and if that cry is ignored, hunger will only call out more urgently, seeking its audience until they also begin to call and cry and demand, and there are many voices now, and hunger has become theatre—a tragedy, perhaps, or a farce. In a hunger strike, the end is not yet written. The play unfolds. (Russell 73)

In turning the H-Blocks of the Maze/Long Kesh into a performance space, the prisoners subvert institutional power dynamics and flip the prescribed roles of oppressor and oppressed. Foucault depicts this relationship through the Panopticon, wherein unseen prison guards constantly surveil prisoners' bodies to discipline certain behaviors to fit within the prison regime, all away from the public eye (Foucault 200-201). If we accept the Panoptic architecture of the prison, we can isolate instances when the prisoners avoided, upended, or otherwise reversed the prison's systemic surveillance, even before commencing their hunger strike. In sneaking messages (or "comms") past prison guards, the prisoners rejected the penal system's communicative power over their bodies. Not only did they invent means of communication with the outside, but they literally used their bodies to hide, transmit, and receive messages. Doing so both rejects prison discipline over their bodies while turning public attention towards the prison and its inmates.

Prolonged public and media attention substantiated the hunger strike and the PIRA's propaganda campaign. It also shone a spotlight on the Maze/Long Kesh not as an institution constructed specifically to control paramilitary prisoners, but as a stage for martyrs. The British government was well aware of the Irish martyr's influence; prison authorities force-fed Thomas Ashe in 1917 to avoid the same mistake made in 1916 with the execution of the Rising's rebel leaders. In the end, Ashe's unexpected death from this very process undid those efforts (Sweeney 426). When the media began vigorously covering the hunger strike after Sands won his parliamentary seat, the republicans' media campaign chipped away at the British government's attempts to control the narrative. Despite PM Thatcher's unyielding focus on the prisoners as violent criminals, the republicans backed the government and the press into a corner, as argued recently by Robert Savage:

The editor of *Panorama*, Roger Bolton, understood the significance of events and pointed out to his colleagues that the IRA had launched a hugely successful propaganda campaign and that the BBC had no choice but to respond. He argued that neither the [Social Democratic and Labour Party] nor the NIO had been able to mount a coherent or intelligent campaign to counter the narrative developed by Sinn Féin. The NIO seemed incapable of getting beyond the line that Margaret Thatcher repeated in interviews denouncing Sands and his colleagues as terrorist criminals guilty of ghastly crimes. The republican narrative extended beyond the David-and-Goliath trope. Television images of emaciated Christ-like figures with long hair and beards confined to hospital beds contrasted with the stern countenance of the intransigent Prime Minister arguing 'crime is crime, it is not political'. Sinn Féin understood the propaganda advantage it

enjoyed and made the most of it, exploiting the hunger strike and the publicity it generated for a fascinated international audience. (Savage 241)

By turning public attention toward the H-Blocks, the prisoners displayed the prison system's brutality, effectively imprisoning the Maze/Long Kesh in its own cell of public observation. As the British government struggled to combat this narrative, the power dynamics reversed.¹² The publicity strategy behind the 1981 hunger strike allowed the prisoners to weaponize their own bodies with an archive of Irish oppression and the world watched it unfold.

¹² This placed prison guards in a vulnerable position; in a relatively small community, prison guards were easily targeted. By 1980, the PIRA had killed eighteen prison officers (Beresford 32).

LITERATURE REVIEW

All nationalisms have a metaphysical dimension, for they are all driven by an ambition to realize their intrinsic essence in some specific and tangible form. The form may be a political structure or a literary tradition... In response, insurgent nationalisms attempt to create a version of history for themselves in which their intrinsic essence has always manifested itself, thereby producing readings of the past that are as monolithic as that which they are trying to supplant.

— Seamus Deane, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*

The above quote by author and critic Seamus Deane succinctly captures a few of the obstacles I will inevitably face during this project. Each of the tangible forms represented in my proposed archive carry versions of a mythological history with them that, when looked at holistically and ideologically, helped sustain a violent conflict for decades. Understanding the hunger strike relies on unpacking the origins of these mythological narratives while remaining cognizant of the ongoing psychological reliance upon them. Creating an archival system that balances these cultural narratives is my long-term goal for this project. I divide my research into three main components: the social impact of documenting this particular post-conflict community, the technical architecture of the digital archive, and the representational items selected as archival materials. Due to my research's interdisciplinary contexts, the content of these three major sections will include detailed literature on each subject. The literature reviewed here provides an overview of larger concepts that reoccur throughout the thesis.

Social Impact

Discussing the structure of a digital archive hinges upon the definition and function of such an electronic collection. Conveniently, Ricardo Punzalan identifies this type of project as “virtual reunification,” which he defines as “the strategy of putting together physically dispersed

heritage collections in order to produce a consolidated, digitized representation of scattered artifacts, literary and artistic works, and/or archival records attributable to a single origin or common provenance” (Punzalan 294). He includes a list of common descriptions for these projects (e.g. virtual archives, online exhibits, electronic editions) and compares them to their non-electronic predecessors, academic compilations and annotated editions. His investigation into the labels and functions of these resources signifies online archives’ mutability. Due to this fluidity, Punzalan argues that project organizers not only need expertise in subject content, but also in conservation, digitization, web design, online description, metadata, and online curation (Punzalan 298).

While I am not a “content expert,” I do have specialized research experience with my archive’s potential materials. As such, I argue comfortably that no peace process can erase a landscape of trauma. While the majority of violence ceased in Northern Ireland before 1998’s signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the sustainability of the peace process remains tenuous. Randall Jimerson’s investigation into the archive’s role in social justice contributes to my understanding of archives as their own systems of power. In “Archives for All: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice” (2007), he discusses how archivists can balance objectivity and neutrality. He defines neutrality as extreme passivity, where objectivity encourages us to be unbiased while maintaining a sense of social justice. He draws upon Verne Harris’ work on the political nature of archives and his definition of archival impartiality as “a chimera turning record-makers into the pawns of those who have power. Any attempt to be impartial constitutes a choice, whether conscious or not, to replicate if not to reinforce prevailing relations of power” (Harris 181). Therefore, responsible archives must operate with their social justice capabilities in mind (Jimerson 280-281). To represent a traumatic event, it is essential to understand the power

structures present during the hunger strike as well as the role of objectivity within a digital archive.

Michelle Caswell's "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives" (2014) bridges the gap between the innate power of records management and community archival practices. She identifies "five key principles from community archives discourses: participation, shared stewardship, multiplicity, archival activism, and reflexivity" that, when applied to current archival trends, can responsibly document human rights conflicts (Caswell 308). She acknowledges the "shifting boundaries of power and violence," particularly when attempting to label singular perpetrators/victims of violence (Caswell 308). Within a Troubles-related context, this labeling fosters an us/them binary, which I identify at numerous stages throughout this thesis. I utilize several of Caswell's key principles, including implementation concerns in my "Conclusions" section. Her delineation of the archivist's role in stewardship, collaboration, and community outreach prompt fascinating, albeit complex, questions for my own archival framework.

Technical Architecture

Digital preservation tools and methods also inform my approach to archival structural integrity from a systems-level perspective. Defining digital preservation as "the active management of digital content over time to ensure ongoing access" emphasizes the proactive maintenance of both systems and files (Library of Congress). As a general introduction here, I briefly review metadata schemas, conceptual frameworks for archival systems, and standards for electronic records management that ensure the trustworthiness of digital repositories.

Metadata is not simply "data about data;" it remains "the backbone of electronic records management systems by providing consistent identification of records, preserving their

authenticity, and implementing retention and disposition requirements” (Franks and Kunde 61). My archive’s metadata not only describes objects to aid in accessibility, but it also creates linked relationships between them. The former descriptive metadata is essential in the retrieval and discoverability of archival content, while the latter will shape the unique functionality of the archive itself. Based on the digital nature of my archive and the range of material within it, appropriate metadata schemas include Dublin Core or Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS). Although basic, Dublin Core is efficient and extensible, while METS’ flexibility lends itself to customization. Since this project will involve extensive metadata, I cannot only plan for surrogate record preservation. Preservation Metadata: Implementation Strategies (PREMIS) offers a useful guide to preserving both digital materials and their metadata.¹³

Digital preservation involves numerous processes from obtaining objects for an archive to users accessing those objects. A popular approach to managing this work is the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model. Originally designed by NASA to archive space-related data, the OAIS Reference Model contains broad-stroke approaches to information preservation, making it suitable for a variety of archival scenarios (Corrado and Moulaison Sandy 55). Its functional model exemplifies how preservation processes interact with each other to create sustainable workflows across archival departments such as acquisitions, data management, and user access. It also details the minimum responsibilities that an archival system and its staff must meet, including acquiring appropriate archival content and adhering to preservation policies (CCSDS 3-1). Several standards besides OAIS ensure the quality and longevity of electronic archives. The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) and their

¹³ While preservation is a key component of implementation and will be noted as such in my “Conclusions” section, it is important to keep these criteria in mind even at this early stage of the planning process.

Research Libraries Group published *Trusted Digital Repositories: Attributes and Responsibilities* (2002), “which further articulated a framework of attributes and responsibilities for trusted, reliable, sustainable digital repositories capable of handling the range of materials held by large and small cultural heritage and research institutions” (OCLC and CRL 1). Based on their framework and electronic preservation criteria, they then created an audit and certification process entitled *Trustworthy Repositories Audit & Certification: Criteria and Checklist* (TRAC) in 2007. These guidelines examine entire digital management systems to determine their trustworthiness, which it defines as “long-term access to managed digital resources” (OCLC and CRL 3). TRAC criteria primarily emphasize proactive risk-management and planning, ranging from data backups to handling financial and organizational failures.¹⁴

Representative Items

In analyzing systemic power structures, we can look back to Deane’s introduction to *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (1990). He identifies several consequences of attempting to formulate a national Irish identity and the inability to escape the power structure of British colonial conditions: “... the island [of Ireland] has now, particularly in the North, and has had for at least two hundred years, British nationalism as a predominant political and cultural influence. In fact, Irish nationalism is, in its foundational moments, a derivative of its British counterpart” (Deane 7). Irish nationalism manifests in several forms in my archival materials; murals in the North, for example, were originally unionist triumphs before republicans

¹⁴ Although I only cite TRAC, other institutions have created similar digital preservation requirements. See the National Archives’ *Universal Electronic Records Management (ERM) Requirements* (2017), *Digital Repository Audit Method Based on Risk Assessment*’s (2008) interactive self-assessment tool through the Digital Curation Centre (DCC) and Digital Preservation Europe, or the Network of Expertise in Long-Term Storage of Digital Resources’ (nestor) *Catalogue of Criteria for Trusted Digital Repositories* (2006).

appropriated and iconized the art form for their own narratives.¹⁵ Deane then identifies the “linguistic question” of forming an authentic Irish identity in the shadow of colonialism because “no language is innocent” (Deane 10-12). Since the backbone of my archive relies upon metadata standards and a controlled vocabulary, ontologies pose a particular challenge. Not only is language in the North politicized in a sectarian context, but it also attempts to claim an Irish national identity that colonialism displaced. The onomastics of Northern Ireland’s second largest city, Derry/Londonderry, reflect this linguistic complexity. By the Plantation of Ulster (1609), the English attempted to systematically erase any Irishness from the map; they translated Irish place names into English and prohibited teaching Irish language in schools.¹⁶ In the case of Derry/Londonderry, they anglicized the Old Irish name “Daire” to “Derry,” and then King James I added the “London” prefix in 1613 (Hepburn, “Derry, or Londonderry”). A stark mural featuring black typeface on a white background reading “YOU ARE NOW ENTERING FREE DERRY” became a lasting image of Northern Ireland’s civil rights movement, indicating a return to an Ireland free from English/“London” rule. This struggle over a single place name highlights the emotional and psychological weight of such acts of linguistic repossession in Northern Ireland.

Where Deane’s text offers an academic understanding of Irish identity, Donna Halliday and Neil Ferguson provide sociological results from their more recent study on youth in post-conflict Northern Ireland. They use a lens of post-memory (the theory that conflict survivors pass their emotional connection to traumatic memories onto their children) to explain the current state

¹⁵ Edna Longley analyzes the function of Northern Irish commemorative practices, specifically through visual cues. Sectarianism, she argues, shaped the divergent formation of Protestant emblems (“*exempla* or history-lessons: a heritage pack as survival-kit”) and Catholic symbols (which “merge memory into aspiration [...] *Tiocfaidh ár lá* (“Our day will come”) underwrites a visionary symbolism that cannot or need not be spelled out”), such that she resists comparing one to the other (Longley 75).

¹⁶ For information regarding the impact of the national school system on the Irish language, see “Tech and (Con)text.”

of social unease in Northern Ireland's younger generations. Interviewees of the study "stressed that often adults were guilty of unintentionally glamorizing the Troubles through recollections of the past and the friendships and camaraderie that existed via tales of various exploits such as time spent in prison etc." (Halliday and Ferguson 5). Consequently, these narratives propagate us/them tribal allegiances in young people who were not alive during the conflict. I will revisit this us/them binary repeatedly throughout this thesis, but most notably in the context of Northern Ireland's proliferation of oral history projects. Ultimately, I believe it would be irresponsible to ignore these social dynamics and dangerous to promote an archive solely as a means of traumatic closure or reconciliation. I aim to create a resource that engages with community leaders and assists with opening dialogs instead of fostering revenge narratives.

The above literature provides a general overview of my framework's social, representative, and technical features. Before diving deeper into these concepts, I provide a review of existing Troubles-related archives, as these collections are texts in themselves. Specifically, I address the representational strategies and structures of these archives before positing alternative methodologies that will make my collection a unique content source. Additionally, due to the violence experienced during the conflict and the precarious state of post-conflict Northern Ireland, I remain cognizant of these archives' psychosocial effects.

ARCHIVE REVIEW

Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN)

Site: cain.ulster.ac.uk

Owners: University of Ulster, International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE); Access Research Knowledge (ARK)

CAIN houses a vast collection of source material about the Troubles. Established in 1996, the CAIN project first went live in March 1997 and remains a valuable resource for those interested in numerous aspects of the conflict. It is semi-regularly populated with new content, including documents from the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) as the UK's thirty-year rule expires. However, the site suffers in organization and structure. For example, there are multiple navigation bars, depending on where users navigate, making the site's layout confusing. Much of the information does not flow and can lead users to dead ends on the site. And although CAIN adds new content, its architecture has not changed since at least 2005 ("CAIN Web Service"). Earlier versions of CAIN accessed through the *UK Web Archive* display a very similar landing page (with exception to the updated main section icons) and much of the web design is identical to its current version.

The lack of metadata for CAIN's surrogate records causes larger, systemic problems. The Digital Preservation Coalition's *Digital Preservation Handbook* (2015) reiterates that metadata is one of the tenets of "long-term preservation, which are to maintain the availability, identity, persistence, renderability, understandability, and authenticity of digital objects over long periods of time" (Digital Preservation Coalition "Metadata and Documentation"). Given that CAIN

began in 1997, it is unlikely that project managers discussed metadata standards within a digital environment; Dublin Core and METS only gained popularity in the early 2000s (DCMI “History of the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative,” Cundiff 52). CAIN’s web design also reflects the site’s 1990s creation, but even these aesthetic issues are minimal compared to the larger problems with usability (layout, navigation, and accessibility), which signal a systemic lack of maintenance.

Belfast Oral History Project

Owner: Boston College (BC)

In 2001, BC’s Belfast Project aimed to capture oral accounts of the Troubles directly from loyalist and republican paramilitaries. Since secrecy within these paramilitary organizations sustained the conflict, sharing such clandestine intelligence constituted “informing,” a transgression which carries a heavy penalty regardless of political affiliation. BC hired Ed Moloney, an Irish journalist who previously gathered and reported on sensitive matters related to the Troubles, as Project Director. Due to the equally delicate nature of the Belfast Project, Anthony McIntyre, a former PIRA member, conducted the PIRA and INLA interviews, while Wilson McArthur, a Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) activist, handled the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and PUP interviews. BC then locked away all interview tapes and transcripts, which would remain unused until the time of the individual interviewees’ deaths (King 31-32). After two of the participants died, Moloney published *Voices from the Grave: Two Men’s War in Ireland* (2010) based on the information shared in those participants’ recordings. On May 5, 2011, BC received a subpoena from the Police Services of Northern Ireland (PSNI) for two of the recorded interviews to aid in an ongoing kidnapping and murder investigation from 1972.¹⁷ A

¹⁷ The legality of the subpoena fell under the *Treaty between the US and UK on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters*, which facilitates the procurement of alleged evidence in open criminal cases through a designated legal body. In this case, the judicial bodies were the PSNI via the UK government and the US Attorney General (Palys and Lowman 283-285).

second subpoena shortly followed, but this time it was for the entire collection of interviews (McMurtie).

The aftermath of these subpoenas demonstrates several legal, archival, and social repercussions of the Belfast Project. Palys and Lowman analyze the legalese of the phrase “to the extent American law allows,” which has become the crux of the fallout between project organizers and BC. They argue that BC counsel took a “Law of the Land” approach, where institutions “always obey the law, including a court order to violate research confidentiality” instead of an ethics-first approach, where they “would maintain confidentiality even if it means defying a court order to disclose confidential research information and being jailed for contempt of court” (Palys and Lowman 272). Although various parties involved with the project interpreted this phrase differently, Robert O’Neill, then head of BC’s Burns Library and project partner, also failed to ensure its inclusion in the participants’ contracts. Moloney asserts that the presence of such a phrase would have halted the project entirely: “There’s no way myself, Anthony McIntyre, or any of the participants would have had anything to do with it because it would have been a red flag, and we would have immediately have said, ‘What the hell does that mean?’” (McMurtie).¹⁸ Unfortunately, the rift between BC and the project’s coordinators functions as a cautionary tale that encourages future researchers to maintain a healthy skepticism of their academic and/or financial sponsors.

The project also bypassed BC’s long-established Institutional Review Board, and the oversight committee specified in Moloney’s contract never manifested. Project partner and head of The Center for Irish Programs, Thomas Hachey, once asked former director of BC’s Irish

¹⁸ Moloney has responded to the controversy at length on his website, www.thebrokenelbow.com. The repository www.bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com also provides extensive documentation related to the subpoenas and legal proceedings.

Studies Program, Kevin O’Neill, to look over some of the interview transcripts: “[Kevin O’Neill] wrote a memorandum saying that he was impressed by their potential value to historians, but was very concerned that the interviewer didn’t appear to have much experience with oral-history methodology—asking leading questions, for example. He says he never heard back from Mr. Hachey” (McMurtie). Palys and Lowman speculate that an ethics committee would mitigate the risk participants took as interviewees through a more appropriate embargo. For example, specifying a future date, thereby allowing the post-conflict peace process a chance to stabilize the region, or restricting access to any interview until all project participants were deceased (Palys and Lowman 277). Although the nature of this work required a degree of secrecy, the formation of an oversight committee (whether ethical, independent, or faculty-based) might have identified the project’s legal and logistical flaws.

BC’s legal vacillation set a disappointing standard for future projects hoping to address sensitive social issues. The institution’s reaction to the subpoenas not only endangered interviewees, but also McIntyre and Moloney. BC claimed that Moloney violated his contract’s confidentiality and published *Voices from the Grave* out of greed. McMurtie, however, highlights the hypocrisy of this claim: “Not only had [BC’s] Robert O’Neill and Mr. Hachey written a glowing preface to the book, but each had received 25 percent of the royalties” (McMurtie). While the Belfast Project raises important questions about academic freedom and research confidentiality, it also demonstrates the necessity for transparent ethical, legal, and procedural processes, especially when a project revolves around hyper-sensitive content.¹⁹ As of 2018, the project remains defunct.

Prisons Memory Archive (PMA)

¹⁹ King further compares the silencing of the Belfast Project’s oral histories to the erasure of possible archival records during wartime.

Site: prisonsmemoryarchive.com

Owner: Queens University Belfast

The PMA consists of 175 video recordings of walk-and-talk interviews conducted in 2006 and 2007 with individuals connected in some way to the prisons in Northern Ireland, both the Maze/Long Kesh and the women's prison, Armagh Gaol. According to the site, they have archived about a quarter of the recordings and expect full funding to complete the project by 2019.²⁰ Because the collection is relatively small, the PMA can exercise organizational control over their records. They also tag some of the video collections with themes ("communications," "place," "religion," etc.) as access points. A section detailing the project's ethical framework includes three missions: life storytelling in the form of an open-ended approach to oral history interviews, co-ownership in which participants also have control over and rights to their interviews, and inclusivity through acknowledging contested versions of history, but nonetheless advocating for various perspectives.

While some videos have thematic tags, the PMA does not include any other descriptive information helpful to end users' access retrieval, aside from the names of the interviewees. This type of retrieval functionality not only impacts end user access, but also archival storage and preservation procedures (OCLC and CRL 35). The PMA also highlights the consequences of inadequate funding. Only 23% of the videos are accessible, and the archive's completion depends upon securing further financial support. The inclusion of the PMA's financial status is helpful to site visitors, but it also raises questions about the archive's future, including its unpublished contents.²¹

²⁰ See at www.prisonmemoryarchive.com/about-us/

²¹ Section 3.2.5 of the *OAIS Reference Model* notes that an archive "should have a formal Succession Plan, contingency plans, and/or escrow arrangements in place in case the Archive ceases to operate or the governing or funding institution substantially changes its scope" (CCSDS 3-6).

Murals of Northern Ireland (MNI)

Site: ccdlib.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/mni

Owner: Claremont Colleges, Dr. Tony Crowley (University of Leeds)

Launched in 2006, the MNI archive contains over 3,500 digitized images of murals dating back to 1979. Dr. Tony Crowley, an English professor at the University of Leeds, took the images himself and after collaborating with Claremont Colleges Digital Library, he learned how to describe the images using Dublin Core.²² Under the guidance of digital librarians, he also faced the challenge of establishing authority control through Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and Name Authority Files.²³ Crowley's extensive metadata creates a searchable database with numerous access points, including mural creation dates, mural locations, and iconography and symbols used within the murals.

This project emphasizes the significance of metadata in an archive's accessibility and discoverability. As the MNI's metadata schema, Dublin Core satisfies many guidelines for information management and access retrieval, including the OAIS Reference Model's functional entity for data management, which "provides services and functions related to populating, maintaining, and accessing descriptive and administrative metadata" (Corrado and Moulaison Sandy 58). As a comparison, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's visually-based "Troubles Archive" has relatively few access points, such as title and creator, preventing site users from searching the collection by other data fields.²⁴ Furthermore, the MNI's collaboration between an English professor and the Claremont Colleges librarians not only encouraged thorough metadata description, but it also secured institutional funding and site hosting for the initiative.

²² See his "From Image to Archive" www.scalar.usc.edu/works/digitising-the-murals-of-northern-ireland-1979-2013-1/3-from-image-to-archive

²³ See his "Digitizing the Murals: Benefits and Challenges" www.scalar.usc.edu/works/digitising-the-murals-of-northern-ireland-1979-2013-1/4-digitizing-the-murals-benefits-and-challenges

²⁴ See www.troublesarchive.com

Based on the scope of existing archives, two prevalent issues facing digital collections are metadata and information architecture. Not only will my proposed archive fill a gap in subject content, but it will also address these significant tenets of trustworthy repositories and long-term digital preservation efforts. Yet, system-level construction should not ignore the sociopolitical dynamics of Northern Ireland. Archives—particularly oral history archives—proliferated after the Good Friday Agreement, and storytelling became a vehicle for post-conflict reconciliation. In the following section, I use this trend to elucidate the ramifications of memory work in Northern Ireland, with a specific emphasis on post-conflict trauma.

TRAUMA WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE ARCHIVE

Shifting ideological and institutional power structures continue to shape memory-based projects in Northern Ireland. In the following section, I describe several issues facing initiatives that have tried to “deal with the past” in Northern Ireland’s current political and sociological climate. I then address the progress electronic archives have made and have yet to make, particularly when documenting ethnographic collections and communities.

Storytelling as Peace Process?

After the end of the Northern Ireland Conflict, several governmental structures were reorganized: “The Belfast or Good Friday Agreement of 1998 provided [...] the establishment of the devolved, power-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly, the setting up of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC), and the transformation of policing” (Hamber and Kelly 29). During this early stage of post-conflict rebuilding, the state’s approach to addressing victims of violence remained unclear. Moreover, political fighting over degrees of transparency on all sides of the conflict periodically suspended the Northern Ireland Assembly. Eventually in 2009, the Assembly Executive proposed ideas to “deal with the past,” including “the creation of a Legacy Commission with a wide remit to conduct a process of information recovery, review and investigate historical cases, and examine linked or thematic cases emerging from the conflict [...] specifically related to storytelling and story-gathering processes” (Hamber and Kelly 30). Continued political strife halted all progress with these state initiatives until 2014, when the Stormont House Agreement established “an Oral History Archive to provide a central place for people from all backgrounds (and from throughout the UK and Ireland) to share experiences and

narratives related to the Troubles” (Stormont House Agreement 5). Yet almost four years later, the state has still not established this program.

The government’s slowly progressing investment in communal healing inadvertently fostered community-driven storytelling initiatives. Over 70 organizations have conducted story-gathering projects in the post-conflict period, many of which are immediately available online while some remain behind embargos for interviewee protection.²⁵ Storytelling as an approach to collecting oral histories is also “one of the main forms of dealing with the violent past in Northern Ireland” (McQuaid 63-64). However, the pervasiveness of these oral histories should not ignore the “naïve or uncritical assumption that testimony work is both healing and socially transformative, which can lead to the creation of a cottage industry of not forgetting” (Hamber and Kelly 28). When institutions—state, financial, or otherwise—stipulate that oral histories must maintain a reconciliatory trajectory, they likely marginalize stories that are not perceived as aiding reconciliation efforts, and thus prioritize particular stories over others.

Troubled and Traumatic Narratives

The evolution of narratives and narrative frames continue to impact Northern Irish society. Post-conflict republican memory faces interpretative challenges within and outside the movement, while continuing to fight for narrative dominance. Even in the midst of the Troubles, the republican movement was fostering and propagandizing a narrative of martyrdom, simultaneously veiled in Ireland’s heroic past while also branding a future state of imagined republicanism: “This Provisional performance is an amalgam, peppered with emotional content and appeals, binding together ritual display, blunt symbolic communication, and public projection of political messages and historic tropes and narratives” (Brown and Viggiani 225).

²⁵ See Hamber and Kelly pp. 32.

Despite this narrative tactic, Stephen Hopkins articulates the difficulties facing Sinn Féin, which continues to commemorate the heroic legacy of republican martyrs as distinctly counter to the British state while their “recent strategies have failed to move Irish society and politics, north or south, closer towards this goal [of Irish unity]” (Hopkins 46).²⁶ There is a clear disconnect between commemorative practices, the legacies they iconize, and the current political landscape that complicates how Sinn Féin, an arguably stagnant political institution, deploys these narratives of republicanism in Northern Ireland.

Graham Dawson describes the psychology and sociology of widespread trauma as another shifting and misappropriated narrative of the conflict. He claims storytelling projects further traumatize Northern Ireland through a three-step process: 1) academic (specifically Humanities) studies misinterpreting how PTSD functions and influences individuals, 2) victims’ support groups attempting to offer a non-existent “closure” to trauma, and 3) irrationally emphasizing storytelling as the means to peacebuilding (Dawson 82-85). This pattern has led to academics interpreting PTSD as the result of a singular, physical event that occurred in an individual’s past—Dawson argues that trauma is mutable and non-linear, often repeatedly reoccurring in an individual’s psyche as memories overlap. This misinterpretation encourages victims’ support groups to offer traumatized communities a singular “closure” as “the wished-for ending to emotional distress” (Dawson 88). Both state-funded and independent archives also promote storytelling as a means of healing Troubles-related PTSD. To achieve this desired closure on a personal level (while moving ever closer to achieving reconciliation for Northern Ireland as a whole), these oral histories necessitate that communities should participate in one or

²⁶ Challenging Sinn Féin’s singular hegemonic narrative of republican memory are: 1) O’Rawe’s highly publicized “republican counter-memory,” 2) anger on behalf of the socialist INLA hunger strikers who died in 1981, who wish to “emphasize a distinct sectional narrative” for these men, and 3) the women hunger strikers of Amagh (Hopkins 52-53).

more storytelling initiatives to “keep ‘in step’ with the requirements of peace-building” (Dawson 88). Though well intended, these projects misunderstand trauma and PTSD, and are complicit in perpetuating destructive psychosocial norms. He concludes by arguing to shift the framework of these narratives away from the trauma/closure binary and “towards the domain of emotion, feeling, and affect in history,” even if these stories do not qualify as legitimate under the state’s definition of and emphasis on reconciliation narratives (Dawson 89). To better reflect the psychological processes that post-conflict communities experience, memory work projects must develop flexible structures that adapt with their ever-fluctuating communities.

Recent studies attempt to capture the scope of Northern Ireland’s collective trauma and PTSD. According to a 2013 study, an “estimated 60% of the adult population reported a traumatic event during their lifetime” and the rates of PTSD are “considerably higher” than countries that have experienced similar civil conflicts (Bunting et al. 139). A 2016 study also found connections between childhood adversities, suicide rates, and mental health, while acknowledging the need for “further research which examines the interaction of the NI conflict and childhood adversities [...] given the increasing rates of psychopathology and suicidality in the population” (McLafferty et al 101). While the peace process ushered in a period of comparatively less violence, both physical and psychological effects of the conflict still reverberate throughout Northern Ireland. Several studies attempt to glean the connection between adult PTSD and childhood psychology in Northern Ireland. In their study on post-memory, Halliday and Ferguson suggest that transgenerational transmission displaces conflict trauma onto newer generations born after the Troubles ended.²⁷ Brendan Browne and Clare Dwyer’s 2014 study identify “ghettoization” and deprivation as socioeconomic influences on children and

²⁷ See “The Politics of Forgiveness: Communal Memory, Reconciliation, and the Post-Conflict Generation” (2015).

young people born after 1998.²⁸ The lasting effects of physical violence should also be included in this discussion since over 47,000 individuals were injured during the conflict. Yet, injured bodies and their narratives tend to be rendered invisible within popular discourses, which frequently highlight the conflict's politics or military/guerrilla activity.²⁹

Post-conflict Northern Ireland desperately needed a way to address and perhaps try to reconcile the events experienced over the previous three decades. While independent storytelling projects were clearly filling a void caused by the lack of state engagement, the rush to record these stories and make them readily accessible was likely prioritized over establishing digital preservation planning and policies. This is not a problem exclusive to Northern Ireland. In general, the scramble to create electronic ethnographic collections has set dangerous precedents. The first stories published typically establish prevailing narratives as opposed to those published later (or not at all), which are easily marginalized. And unfortunately, “the development of tools and models for accessing the impact and usability of these digital assets have not kept pace” with the technology that created digital archives in the first place (Marsh et al. 328). This encourages a wealth of ethnographically-focused digital collections without analytical standards “beyond simple usage statistics and frequency of visits to evaluate the value of their work” (Marsh et al. 331). Even though numerous disciplines have conducted studies on ethnographic electronic archives, “none have investigated digital spaces to specifically glean how digital surrogates are encountered, used, understood, or otherwise made meaningful by different users” (Marsh et al. 365). Archivists have yet to create methods to understand significant dimensions of ethnographic digital collections, which could be detrimental to the vary communities they aim to reflect.

²⁸ See Brendan Browne and Clare Dwyer's “Navigating Risk: Understanding the Impact of the Conflict on Children and Young People in Northern Ireland” (2014).

²⁹ See Nicole McClure's “Injured Bodies, Silenced Voices: Reclaiming Personal Trauma and the Narration of Pain in Northern Ireland” (2015).

Archival and other memory-based projects are entangled in the cultural fibers of Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement. While one can easily focus on projects that have actively hindered peace efforts, like BC's Belfast Project, the comparatively passive factors mentioned above indicate insidious, systemic issues within many similar initiatives. Electronic archives must maintain a self-awareness that encourages introspection while regarding the communities within which they work: "The positionality of the practitioner, his or her shifting relationship to the community where memory work is located, and the ever-changing political, social, and professional context of archival labor all contribute to the imperative for critical self-reflection" (Caswell 314). A multifaceted approach to context and content creation will ultimately assist in this archive's goal of reflecting the historical, social, and psychological complexities of the conflict. Exploring the politics of the Irish language will further demonstrate the importance of robust archival context at a micro-level. In the following section, I complicate the linguistics of Northern Ireland through the lens of metadata standards and controlled vocabularies. I then step back and propose methods to further contextualize archival items and source materials through cultural criticism and historiography.

TECH AND (CON)TEXT

A virtual reunification project hinges upon collecting surrogate records from various sources. While this process presents challenges to preserving electronic records and their corresponding metadata, removing records from a predesigned setting also creates a contextual vacuum. Specifically, “lifting a digital object out of its original context in order to be used in another context carries with it the dangers of both omission and commission,” where users will either not understand the gaps in information or they will “fill in the gaps” with incorrect interpretations (Lee 100). The archivist must balance between providing overwhelming and insufficient amounts of contextual data.

Existing metadata schemas catalog and classify these types of metadata to avoid problems of omission, commission, and conflicting information. But what if an archival system demands contradictory narratives to accurately reflect a deeply contested history? Conflicting histories define the Troubles and the hunger strike on a spectrum that slides from divergent ideologies to different versions of significant events. My ideal archival system will incorporate multiple perspectives while grounding them via culturally critical lenses. For example, narratives originating from the PIRA’s propaganda campaign will not be excluded from the archive. However, the archive’s historiography will also contextualize the function of republican propaganda during the Troubles and how it operates within the archive’s narrative. For the purposes of this thesis, I divide archival context into two facets: metadata elements and a

secondary descriptive layer to analyze and otherwise annotate archival items.³⁰ The following sections identify how conflicting data operates within both types of metadata as well as theoretical approaches I would take to address them.

Metadata Elements

It is a truism to say that no language is innocent. It is more difficult to trace, within the rhetorics of political and literary discourses, the forms and varieties of incrimination, subjection, insurgency, evasion, and stereotyping that determine or are determined by our past and present interpretations.

— Seamus Deane, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*

It was clear to me at a fairly early stage that the Irish language was much more than a medium of communication, that wrapped up in it was the history of conflict and dispossession, genocide and emigration.

— Diarmait Mac Giolla Chríost, *Jailtacht*

Linguistic politicization in Northern Ireland infects the narrative of an electronic archive. What narrative shifts, for example, would “terrorist” or “political prisoner” encourage as subject headings on a record for the Falls Library Hunger Strike (FLHS) mural?³¹ In an archival context, legitimizing politicized terms bolsters their ideological structures. And yet it is impossible to separate terms, labels, and even place names from the weight of their ongoing social and cultural signifiers. In this section, I tease out these issues by describing how controlled vocabularies operate as organization tools for resource retrieval before identifying problems with authority control. I then provide a brief history of the Irish language in Northern Ireland’s republican communities before discussing how linguistics inform object representations through metadata.

Controlled vocabularies

³⁰ I use these labels to distinguish between administrative, bibliographic, or indexing metadata and what I describe as, for lack of an established term, a secondary descriptive layer. Similar to the overlay of a catalog discovery layer, I envision this metadata functioning as freeform annotations and cultural contextualizations of archival content that operate beyond the bounds of metadata schemas.

³¹ See Fig. 1 on pp. 47.

A controlled vocabulary can be defined as “any standardized list of terms that have been selected for consistent use in describing or indexing information resources” (Miller 129). While controlled vocabularies address numerous linguistic issues like ambiguity and associative relationships, I primarily focus on synonymy. As an example, synonym control would prevent describing the FLHS as “street art” while classifying other murals in the collection as “mural art” or “graffiti.” An uncontrolled search would generate a split file, where users could not retrieve every mural in the collection if they searched by one of the above terms. Within digital collections, Miller notes that “in most cases one of the terms is selected as the preferred term used in the metadata, and the other terms are used as cross references or links to that term” (Miller 132). Identifying “mural art” as the preferred term and linking it to “street art” and “graffiti” would not only generate all murals, but it would also allow users to search with any of the linked terms.

Highly specific or localized collections commonly establish their own controlled vocabularies. Even the massive Library of Congress Name Authority File and Subject Headings might not contain local individuals or hyper-specific terminologies. Customizing a controlled vocabulary “is usually approached from both a top-down and a bottom-up perspective,” where top-down “means consulting existing controlled vocabularies and various other existing resources to glean potential terms” and bottom-down “means starting with the individual digital objects, analyzing their content and generating a list of potential terms” (Miller 144). My own method of describing a highly specific collection will mirror this process as it would be irresponsible to entirely ignore such a vast resource like the Library of Congress files. Yet, the systems and institutions who legitimize and authorize these vocabularies require a critical approach.

The Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) is an extensive collection of controlled vocabularies and is used in libraries worldwide. During the 1950s, its philosophy was less focused on consistent cataloging and more concerned with reflecting the probable search terms that a reader would use to find materials. But the assumed perspective of this typical reader reflects the larger, systemic biases within the LCSH at the time: “The reader has been identified as American/Western European, Christian, white, heterosexual, and male” (Marshall 6). Vocal critics have revealed LCSH’s tendency to perpetuate biased terminologies for any group of people that do not fit the above assumed reader.³² Furthermore, “by utilizing the language and perspective of a particular group of readers, rather than seeking a more neutral set of terms, LCSH can make materials hard to find for other users, stigmatize certain groups of people with inaccurate or demeaning labels, and create the impression that certain points of view are normal and others unusual” (Knowlton 125). Not only do biased terminologies marginalize large groups of people—most often people with little or no power, position, and/or privilege—but they also hinder their designed functionality of operating as a reliable retrieval tool. The Library of Congress has since altered its process for updating and adding terms, and now regularly changes its authorized language.³³ Even so, those who use LCSH must exercise caution when relying on such a deeply fallible resource.

Politicizing the Irish language

³² For a range of commentary (including ableist criticism) regarding LCSH bias, see Sanford Berman’s *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People* (1971), Hope Olson’s “Patriarchal Structures of Subject Access and Subversive Techniques for Change” (2001), Melissa Adler’s “Classification Along the Color Line: Excavating Racism in the Stacks” (2017), “Teaching Other Tongues: Addressing the Problem of ‘Other’ Languages in the Library” (2011) and “Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction” (2013) by Emily Drabinski, Matt Johnson’s “Transgender Subject Access: History and Current Practice” (2010), and “How Disability Studies Scholars Interact with Subject Headings” (2014) by Amelia Koford.

³³ See “Process for Adding and Revising Library of Congress Subject Headings” at www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/subject/lcsh-process.html and “Birth of a Subject Heading” (2018) by Anna M. Ferris.

As LCSH demonstrate, authorizing descriptive terms while remaining cognizant of bias and prejudice is an arduous task. Legitimizing the linguistics of the Troubles—including politically loaded Irish and English language terminologies—doubly complicates this process. Although not all Irish language speakers in Northern Ireland associated themselves with or condoned republican activities, the republican movement and the PIRA appropriated the language as the voice of republican resistance, particularly within the Long Kesh/Maze Prison.³⁴ Additionally, current efforts aim to combat the Irish language's steady decline both north and south of the border. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's data on language use indicate a drop in spoken Irish. The 2011/2012 statistics report that 11% of the population can understand spoken Irish, which fell to 10% in 2013/2014, and further fell to 9% in 2015/2016 (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency). In the Republic, the 2016 Census indicated a decline in speakers since the previous 2011 Census: "Of the 1.76 million who said they could speak Irish, 73,803 said they speak it daily outside the education system, a fall of 3,382 on the 2011 figure" (Central Statistics Office 66). Even the Gaeltacht areas, where Irish is the primary spoken language, experienced a similar decline of "11.2 per cent on the 2011 daily Irish speakers figure," even though the total population only decreased by 0.6% (Central Statistics Office 69). Irish Language Commissioner Rónán Ó Domhnaill identifies technology, globalization's increasing emphasis on English, and few opportunities to speak Irish outside of school for the language's decline.³⁵ Others blame low investments "in community-based language planning" (Walsh et al.).

³⁴ The Irish language is also not subject to a sweeping sectarian divide. Although the majority of Irish speakers are Catholic, the statistics cited note that Protestants speak Irish—2% of the above respondents identified themselves as Protestant in 2011/2012 and 3% in 2013/2014 and 2015/2016. *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland* (1997), edited by Aodán Mac Póilin, further details Protestant and unionist relationships with learning and speaking Irish.

³⁵ See WBUR's interview with Rónán Ó Domhnaill www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2015/06/15/irish-language-decline

Previously, Anglicization and famine caused the Irish language's near-erasure during the nineteenth-century.³⁶ The Anglicization of Ireland was based on both geography and social class, spreading from east to west with the majority of Ireland's rural, lower classes residing on its western seaboard (Morley 335). The 1831 establishment of a primary national school system destabilized the prevalence of the Irish language. These national schools "ultimately supplanted the Irish language with English. The state's national system of education established English as the only language of instruction and prohibited the use of Irish—often punishing students for speaking it" (Laukaitis 222). Despite the State's prohibition on Irish in its schools, "on the eve of the Great Famine of 1845-1852, Irish remained the vernacular language all along the western and southern seaboard. Crucially, however, Famine-related mortality was highest among the poor in remoter parts of Connacht and Munster—precisely the demographic group that was least likely to know English" (Morley 335).

By the end of the 1800s, an ongoing nationalist decolonization effort culminated in cultural revival movements, which included the Irish language. The Irish Republican Brotherhood "saw cultural difference as a weapon in the struggle for political independence" (Andrews 50). The establishment of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 and the Gaelic League in 1893 not only promoted the cultural imperative that Irishness was by definition the opposite of Englishness, but also "that what remained of native Irish civilization was to be found preserved in the language, customs, and values of contemporary rural Irish-speaking society (Andrews 51).³⁷ Post-independence, the southern Irish state focused on three language goals: "to

³⁶ The social influence of rising Victorianism and English economics were also gradual factors on the Irish language's decline throughout this period. Douglas Hyde provides a contemporary perspective on the "folly of neglecting what is Irish and hastening to adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it is English" in his 1892 speech, "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland."

³⁷This emphasis on an authentic Irish identity is similar to the romanticized notions of Irishness present during the Irish Literary Revival.

maintain Irish in those parts of Ireland where it continued to be the language of everyday use; to restore Irish as the language of popular use in the rest of Ireland; and to provide the infrastructure necessary for the maintenance of the language in the Gaeltacht and its revival in the rest of Ireland” (Mac Giolla Chríost 399-400).³⁸ No longer isolated to revivalist movements, the Irish language’s presence within state hierarchies signifies its influence on the formation of an Irish identity.

Considering the language’s ties to this idealized, authentic Irish identity, it is unsurprising that the PIRA would appropriate it into their constitution during the Troubles. This was not an isolated move on the Provisionals’ part, either—Belfast already had Irish speaking social clubs and an active branch of the Gaelic League by the 1950s, resulting in “a small circle of Irish-speaking intellectuals” (Andrews 59). Within the prison system, however, Irish became the language of the Provisionals’ struggle. Before the retraction of Special Category Status, political prisoners of the Maze/Long Kesh were free to associate amongst several Nissen huts. This provided the opportunity to learn Irish through classes led by fellow republican prisoners and rigorous language immersion in one of two specifically designated “Gaeltacht huts”: “We weren’t allowed to look at English language television or radio. If you broke the rules or if you spoke English you were excluded from the Gaeltacht and there was a big list of people waiting to take your place” (Jailtacht 19).³⁹ Speaking and learning Irish within the prison was essential to boosting morale and fostering a republican identity, particularly after the retraction of Special Category Status.⁴⁰ During this period, protesting prisoners were isolated to their own H-blocks

³⁸ Mac Giolla Chríost details the balance between language “pragmatism and aspiration” in his history of Irish throughout the twentieth-century, including the state’s relationship with and impact on the Gaeltacht regions, from tangible economic policies to the state’s construction of an idealized, independent Irish identity.

³⁹ Mac Giolla Chríost also notes that several key figures resided in these Irish language huts, including Bobby Sands and Gerry Adams.

⁴⁰ Olaf Zenker argues that the Irish language encourages a unique Irish worldview that is notably different from an English language worldview, specifically in Northern Irish adult second-language learners in “Linguistic Relativity

and were frequently held in solitary cells. Denied the freedom to associate, a prisoner functioning as the Irish language teacher would shout lessons through the cell door and down the wing. Students would listen, shout back responses, or scrawl notes on their cell walls (Jailtacht 25-26). The drafters of the Good Friday Agreement as late as 1998 recognized the relationship between Irish language and identity. The agreement includes a clause recognizing “the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity” (Jailtacht 43).

The Irish language and the overwhelming politicization of language in this sectarian context challenge any archival system that aims to enforce both linguistic control and value. Throughout this thesis, for example, I use “Northern Ireland” as my preferred place name. Yet, this country is also referred to as Ulster, the North of Ireland, the North, and the Six Counties. Since each label carries distinct political connotations, users could interpret any system that legitimizes one term over the other as validating that label’s ideologies. Additionally, the language(s) deployed by users for content retrieval should contribute to a culturally responsive controlled vocabulary. Collating users’ search techniques involves identifying which words they use to search and how they construct search strings. The following section includes current trends in user searching patterns within electronic archives and catalogs. This heavily relies upon the relationship between controlled vocabularies and keyword searching in the Age of Google. I then discuss language and authority control in similarly sensitive ethnographic collections.

Searching (for) language

Not only is the construction of controlled vocabularies ethical and time-consuming work, but practitioners continue to debate its utility: “Over the last three decades, it has been

and Dialectical Idiomatization: Language Ideologies and Second Language Acquisition in the Irish Language Revival of Northern Ireland” (2014). Zenker’s argument is rooted in a neo-Whorfian interpretation that combines the Irish language’s proliferation of idioms with the impact of second language acquisition as a mental process.

acknowledged that online public access catalogs are difficult for patrons to use. Part of this difficulty is related to the complexity of subject searching in the catalog. Part of it stems from patrons becoming more accustomed to Google-like keyword searching” (Gross et al. 2). Even though keyword-driven search engines have altered how patrons retrieve materials, studies show that controlled vocabularies and subject headings still constitute a significant percentage of keyword search results. Gross et al.’s 2005 study found that an average of 36% of keyword search results would be eliminated if controlled vocabularies were removed. And their 2015 follow-up study, which includes the recent addition of searchable ‘Tables of Contents’ and summaries/abstracts to bibliographic records, found that about 27% of search results would be lost.⁴¹ Therefore, the debate should not focus on systems constructed from either keywords or controlled vocabularies, but rather how we can provide users with the best information gathering processes.

One method is to incorporate users’ natural search patterns into a given system. Folksonomies or query expansions encourage users to add their own tags to supplement subject headings.⁴² These approaches offer opportunities for community engagement by developing a culturally responsive language within the archive’s vocabulary. In fact, emerging systems aim to incorporate the divergent dialects of indexer and user. Lin et al. developed a hybrid Dual-Perspective Navigation Framework (DPNF) for their image-based repository which “utilizes the mechanisms of faceted browsing and tag-based navigation in its design of seamless interaction between experts’ subject headings and public tags” for cultural heritage images (Lin et al. 821). The results of using DPNF as a case study in image searching effectiveness, efficiency, and

⁴¹ See Gross, et al. 2015, pp. 31.

⁴² Gross et al. mention these in their 2015 study alongside other possible solutions to the keyword-controlled vocabulary searching dilemma, including tools to train users on the system’s information architecture and expansive metadata to bolster keyword searching like ‘Tables of Contents’ (Gross et al. 2015 13).

satisfaction found that “[b]y truly integrating both experts’ and general users’ descriptors to represent the aboutness of an item more comprehensively, DPNF reinforces the strengths of both the metadata-based and tag-based approaches without changing their nature or forcing users to choose one over the other” (Lin et al. 836). Although a hunger strike archive would contain more than just images, Lin et al.’s hybrid approach argues for a systems-level design that incorporates users’ search patterns with preexisting vocabulary control instead of fighting against them.⁴³

Others have taken an innovative approach to remixing the standard catalog search. Julia Bauder and Emma Lange revised Grinnell College Library’s search results into optional data visualizations based on the item’s classification number and LCSH, as opposed to the typical list-view. This produced a visual, faceted-interface derived from preexisting metadata where users observed how relevant materials were clustered throughout the library’s collection. Bauder and Lange “enable[ed] users to interact and explore their search results in a profoundly different way” (Bauder et al. 92). Though this approach avoided adding new metadata, it suggests that we can present existing data in creative ways while encouraging users to better understand the scope of a collection’s materials. In a “failure analysis” of searches conducted through Stanford University Library’s SearchWorks discovery platform, Irina Trapido suggests several methods to incorporate existing metadata (in this case, LCSH) into user queries, including “raising the level of patron familiarity with the LCSHs, integrating cross-references for authorized subject terms, enabling more sophisticated facet-based access to subject information by allowing users to manipulate facets independently, and exposing hierarchical and associative relationships among LCSHs” (Trapido 19). A transparent and inclusive archive could actively demonstrate how it

⁴³ System responses could also provide a flexible searching process. Prompts like “Did you mean...” redirect users to the most relevant subject heading. Auto-completing a search field with controlled terms based on the letters the user enters similarly directs users to the archive’s existing vocabulary.

categorizes and qualifies culturally weighted terms, ideally as a user-accessible module in the archive's guidelines.

With the advent of linked data, metadata should not remain closed source and stagnant. Southwick et al. describe the evolving state of controlled vocabularies: "Metadata can no longer be migrated, imported, and entered into systems with minimal awareness of its characteristics... Data that are meant to be linked need careful attention in order to be normalized in the transformation process" (Southwick et al. 178). My future archive will need workflows that keep pace with the rapid growth and expansion of technology. Retaining any cultural or historical relevance as an archival system therefore involves controlled vocabulary construction, interoperability, and adaptability.⁴⁴ Critics are still developing theoretical approaches to controlled vocabularies and linked data. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain an evolving knowledge of these metadata structures and their place in the Semantic Web. One concept that overlaps with both controlled vocabularies and linked data is a synonym ring: "Synonym rings are different from the other kinds of controlled vocabularies [...] in that the terms are not used in metadata records but are entered into search engine software" (Miller 136). Although tangential to an archive's metadata, synonym rings treat terminology sets as equal, so there is no preferred relationship between terms. While synonym rings are not a means to avoid discussing elaborate linguistics of ethnographic collections, they encourage further research regarding the impact and influence of linked data, the Semantic Web, and electronic archives.

Irish language complicates the construction of an appropriate metadata workflow through its politically saturated linguistics, particularly in the context and deployment of PIRA

⁴⁴ For controlled vocabulary construction and maintenance see Pattuelli et al.'s "Ontology Building for Linked Open Data: A Pragmatic Perspective" (2015), Radio and Hanrath's "Measuring the Impact and Effectiveness of Transitioning to a Linked Data Vocabulary" (2016), and Mi and Pollock's "Metadata Schema to Facilitate Linked Data for 3D Digital Models of Cultural Heritage Collections: A University of South Florida Libraries Case Study" (2018).

propaganda within the prison. Yet, current librarians, archivists, and scholars are addressing the intricacy of ontologies. Hannah Buckland described the need for “culturally responsive metadata” during her talk at the American Library Association’s Annual 2017 Conference, citing her library’s wealth of indigenous holdings and the absence of subject headings that her indigenous patrons use when retrieving materials. This caused her to shift the library’s metadata framework from “aboutness” to “fromness,” particularly when working within a small, culturally specific collection.⁴⁵ This blur of “aboutness” and “fromness” in an Irish context can be seen in the use of onomastic slashes (e.g. Maze/Long Kesh, Derry/Londonderry) to avoid the political connotations of using one name over the other. Community outreach can enhance this representational “fromness” and will be addressed in my “Conclusions.” For now, I argue that any future vocabulary should be created with community representation and linked data in mind, thereby avoiding a costly or time-intensive transition away from marginalizing, stagnant metadata. Moreover, the current literature suggests that the end result will enhance resource findability and retrieval within the archive and in the larger landscape of the Semantic Web.

Secondary Descriptive Layer

The above approaches do not solve the ethical questions of language within a culturally complex archive. Since the sectarian ideologies of the Troubles frequently manifest in language, I suggest that this archive’s content requires a secondary layer of cultural contextualization. These added descriptions will frame archival items through a variety of interpretive lenses and will function on a sliding scale. Users can decide whether or not to engage with detailed analyses, which gives them agency to interact with archival content. One side of this spectrum

⁴⁵ See a review of Buckland’s ALA presentation at www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2017/patron-driven-subject-access-how-librarians-can-mitigate-that-power-to-name/ and Buckland’s video, “Decolonizing Catalogs in Tribal College Libraries,” which describes how power structures embedded in western libraries perpetuate white supremacy and racism through oppressive ontologies at www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUmS2dmngE0

will contain basic information about the item in the same way indexed metadata is presented through schemas. Upon moving further away from this side of the scale, users will find various readings of archival items. This could contain literary theory, historiography, or political analyses, depending on the content of each item.

Falls Library Hunger Strike Mural

I use the FLHS mural (see fig. 1) as a template for this descriptive layer. It includes a close reading of the mural with corresponding commentary of possible archival features, such as external and internal linking, resources for users via a bibliography, notes for future discussions, and user-driven interactions. I then propose methods to develop the archive's narrative through contextualizing historical sources, developing user-driven lenses, and providing transparent and inclusive archival guidelines and policies.



Fig. 1. Falls Library Hunger Strike Mural, photo by Martin Melaugh on CAIN, www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/cgi-bin/AHRC/photos.pl?id=973&mon=549

As a response to the colonial crisis in Northern Ireland, Seamus Deane voices Field Day's goal of establishing a "new discourse for a new relationship between our idea of the human subject and our idea of human communities" (Deane 3). He highlights Terry Eagleton's argument for irony as the only lens that can prevent reproducing the "oppressive conditions" of nationalism's binaries (English/Irish, Protestant/Catholic) because "[a]ny politics that has a transformative power has to envisage, if in any negative way, the freedom and self-autonomy that would make such politics unnecessary" (Deane 4). Essentially, irony eliminates the paradox of binary oppositions.

Deane directly addresses Field Day's view of the Troubles as a colonial conflict by first explaining the trend of historical revisionism. While attempting to "demolish the nationalist mythology," revisionism also argues that colonialism is a mere ideological "phantom" of nationalism (Deane 6-7). Aiming to confront nationalism's "disfiguring effects," Deane notes that "Irish nationalism is, in its foundational moments, a derivative of its British counterpart" (Deane 7). This derivative relationship particularly resonates in Northern Ireland's political murals. Though republican murals surged during and after the 1981 hunger strike (due in large part to Bobby Sands' "Smash H-Block" campaign), murals were originally loyalist tributes, most commonly to King William of Orange. Generally, Ireland's derivative relationship to Britain not only prevented any kind of liberation, but it has also mutated into the current state of religious sectarianism, or Northern Ireland's own "contemporary colonialism" (Deane 8).

Northern Ireland's murals are a visual representation of both loyalist and republican attempts to construct their own mythologies through their mutual yearning for what Deane describes as metaphysical essentialism. In Ireland, monolithic readings of the past can only be shakily constructed amalgams of the few pieces of history that haven't been destroyed through centuries of invasions. The mural on the Falls Road Library, which features the ten hunger strikers around an H-Block, both of which are situated above lines of Bobby Sands' poetry, is doubly emblematic of this kind of patchwork nationalism as it is itself an amalgam of previous amalgams. The corners are decorated with figures from Irish history,

Works cited or referenced will be included at the bottom of all descriptions, similar to a works cited page or the References section of a Wikipedia article. If materials are in the public domain, this would also be a good opportunity to link directly to the text of the resource using a PURL or permalink.

Internal links to other murals in the archive (e.g. those in the Smash H-Block campaign or works depicting King William of Orange) would quickly contextualize close readings while signaling other resources available within the collection.

Hovering over terms identifying image details (e.g. Michael Gaughan or Mairéad Farrell) would highlight these visuals on the image itself, perhaps through some kind of greying or blurring of the rest of the image. This would quickly identify and isolate image details without the need for directional descriptors (e.g. "top left corner" or "bottom center"). This allows users to readily engage and interact with archival items.

including hunger strikers Frank Stagg, Michael Gaughan, and Mairéad Farrell, and Irish Civil War veteran Nora Connolly (1). Incorporating the republican movement's international scope, the mural also features Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and a Native American. Gandhi's presence reiterates the plight of the hunger strikers, while the other three figures signify a global struggle for civil rights. Together, these figures along the mural's border commemorate Ireland's past while simultaneously affiliating the republican movement with the success of other international civil rights campaigns. Ultimately, the flags of the four provinces of Ireland (featured in each of the mural's corner most spaces) strategically contain these symbolic figures within the idea of a united Ireland.

Just inside the border are four symbols: a lark, barbed wire, Easter lilies, and a black rose, which is encircled with white and orange ribbons emblazoned with a faintly visible "Róisín Dubh." The lark is another facet of Sands' propagandist influence and through his use of the symbol in his prison writings, it has become a symbol for Sands himself (2). A lark entangled in barbed wire is a common mural icon, which accounts for the artist's decision to depict both images at the top, with the images of the ten hunger strikers (and Celtic Mother Ireland) symbolically caught between freedom and imprisonment. The two flowers at the bottom harken back to the 1916 Rising, which the Easter lily specifically commemorates. Though the "Róisín Dubh" represents Ireland, its poetic usage is perhaps more significant. Not only was Sands familiar with Pádraig Pearse's translation of the political song under the same title, but he also wrote his own adaptation, "The Sleeping Rose," in which the "Rose of Munster" has "choked upon her blood / And Barry's men died in her screams, / Trampled down into her mud" (Sands).

The Celtic designs are similar to the zoomorphic figures and knots present in early Christian manuscripts. Though these designs link Northern Ireland to a pre-conquest Celtic Ireland, the muralist did not need to reach that far into Ireland's past. During the early days of the Irish Free State, Celtic revivalist imagery exploded in popular culture. During this time, government materials like the Free State *Handbook* of 1932 featured "simple and effective [designs], heavily dependent on Irish early Christian visual sources" in an "elaborate exercise in Celtic

Repetitive symbols, like the lark, would encourage internal linking to other items that share this iconography. Such linking would also be possible through indexed subject tags.

Visual descriptions like the zoomorphic figures and Celtic knots should be annotated with these visuals. If the archive is unable to secure intellectual property permissions to host such images within the archive, then any external links could include a miniature preview of the image on the other side of the hyperlink when users hover over the linked text. This function (termed "framing") will still adhere to copyright laws, i.e. all hyperlinks and frames will be to materials in the public domain, will include proper citations, and/or the owner(s) of the works will be contacted to approve framing permissions. Protected materials will only be included in the works cited section to avoid any copyright or intellectual property rights infringement.

revivalism” (Turpin 57). The faded, swirled design behind Sands’ poem at the mural’s center is reminiscent of the intricate whorls in *The Book of Kells*. Though the latter used these designs to promote thoughtful meditations, the mural’s context traps the viewer within Sands’ poetic voice (the H-Block resting just above also emphasizes this containment). The zoomorphic birds along the border can be seen on the Free State *Handbook* of 1932’s cover, but it also relates to republican bird imagery present during “the Troubles,” namely Sands’ lark and the Provisionals’ phoenix (3). These Celtic elements appropriate a “pre-conquest Catholic Ireland,” while restaging the Irish Free State’s use of the same images, thus further validating their capitalized fight for “SAOIRSE” and “FREEDOM.”

This would also inform users of other helpful resources. For example, the National Library of Ireland has digitized the cover of their edition of the Free State *Handbook* and Trinity College Dublin has digitized the entirety of *The Book of Kells* and is available through their Digital Collections.

Notes

1. The distribution of gender is interesting to note. The two men from hunger strikes past are in the top corners, closely aligning them with the ten hunger strikers from 1981, while the two female icons are placed at the bottom of the mural. Considering the priority placed on the hunger strike in the Maze/Long Kesh over the contemporary women’s protest in Armagh, could we read the gender politics at play?
2. Mary Kenney also notes the “original ‘Lark’ mural design appeared as the cover illustration of Bobby Sands’ prison poems” (Kenney 153).
3. The PIRA claimed the phoenix as their mascot after the bombing of Bombay Street with their slogan “out of the ashes of Bombay Street arose the Provisional IRA” (Wills 199). Phoenix pendants are still available through Sinn Féin’s online store.

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Contextualizing conflicting narratives

One of the primary goals of this archive is to remain narratively inclusive and feature histories from differing ideological and political perspectives. This will impact item annotations, displays, and interpretations, and will undoubtedly sustain conflicting versions of history.⁴⁶ My approach to handling this precarious historiography will involve:

- Establishing narrative sources, whether they are state/government documents, PIRA propaganda, or other sources, and provide a historiography of these narratives
- Creating user-driven lenses for various interpretations (biographies of figures involved in the events, geographic representations for spatial analyses, timelines)
- Providing archival guidelines that delineate the archive's mission statement and any policy decisions that would benefit the user population through transparency

An archive on this subject cannot avoid interpretive conflict. However, implementing a process of inclusivity and transparency—both for the stories being told and how those stories are structured within an archival system—will provide a holistic view of how the hunger strike manifests in the cultural consciousness.

To demonstrate how the above points could aid in reading a deeply contested period of the hunger strike, I would like to focus on July 1981. At this point in the protest, four of the hunger strikers were dead, and a chain reaction of negotiations ensued between the PIRA and the British government. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland issued a statement on June 30 regarding the government's prison policies while reiterating that they would not grant political

⁴⁶ Inclusivity will also influence the archive's approach to selection and appraisal of materials, which I discuss in "Representational Objects."

status to any prisoner. He also added that granting the PIRA's "five demands" would essentially mean the prisoners were running the prison (Atkins). In response, Richard O'Rawe, the PIRA's Public Relations Officer, released a statement on July 4, which clarified what appeared to be a misunderstanding regarding the fundamentals of the five demands. Most importantly, O'Rawe stated that the prisoners did not wish to receive special category status solely for themselves, but rather that these demands should be applied to all prisoners (Hennessey 302). The prisoners' statement reactivated secret backchannel communications through "The Mountain Climber," signaling that the government took their position seriously and was willing to negotiate (beyond the public eye, at least).⁴⁷ However, striker Joe McDonnell's health was rapidly deteriorating and all parties involved desired to reach a consensus before his death—the PIRA did not want another man to die and the government knew another death would only worsen social tensions at home and abroad.

Establishing narrative sources

The content of archival items will shift the demand for narrative sources on a case-by-case basis. But the general approach will include selecting appropriate sources, contextualizing those sources' historiography, and updating them as new materials become available to encourage the growth and evolution of the archive itself. Given the communication patterns during July 1981, helpful narrative sources would include the government, the prisoners, and "The Mountain Climber."

- Government

PM Thatcher repeatedly announced her position on the hunger strike. In a March 1981 speech, she asserted:

⁴⁷ This operative previously carried messages between the British government and the PIRA during the 1980 hunger strike.

Those terrorists will carry their determination to disrupt society to any lengths. Once again we have a hunger strike at the Maze Prison in the quest for what they call political status. There is no such thing as political murder, political bombing or political violence. There is only criminal murder, criminal bombing and criminal violence. We will not compromise on this. There will be no political status. (Thatcher, “Speech in Belfast”)

One month later, she reiterated:

There can be no question of political status for someone who is serving a sentence for crime. Crime is crime is crime: it is not political, it is crime, and there can be no question of granting political status. I just hope that anyone who is on hunger strike for his own sake will think fit to come off hunger strike, but that is a matter for him. (Thatcher, “Press Conference Ending Visit to Saudi Arabia - IRA Hunger Strikes”)

Even as late as 1990, PM Thatcher proclaimed via a spokesman: “We do not negotiate with terrorists and have no intention of negotiating with the IRA or their political wing” (Longworth).

Yet in the summer of 1981, she and the British government were secretly in talks to negotiate an end to the hunger strike, which was a balancing act in itself: “If it were thought that the Government was negotiating with the strikers, or using the [Irish Commission for Justice and Peace] as negotiators by proxy, this would be likely to produce a strong reaction in the Protestant community, and thus put at risk Catholic inhabitants of Northern Ireland” (Hennessey 286).

Hennessey analyzes government documents recently made public regarding the hunger strike and notes:

It is surprising to find that Mrs Thatcher’s hand was literally all over the ‘deal’ sent to the Provisionals – revealing the key involvement of a Prime Minister who claimed that she refused to negotiate with terrorists. As Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher did not manage the

day-to-day handling of the hunger strikes, but she had the last word on the policy options offered to her. In this respect the Government's strategy rested with the Prime Minister – she was thus, in a memorable phrase used by one of her Northern Ireland ministers, 'the lady behind the veil.' (Hennessey 8)

PM Thatcher's commentary throughout these government documents establishes the limits of her willingness to compromise. Due to these insurmountable obstacles and McDonnell's death in the early morning hours of July 8, the hunger strike did not end until months later.

PM Thatcher's disparate public and private actions demonstrate the fragile nature of Northern Ireland during this time. Displaying public statements in tandem with government documents would provide a striking and holistic view of government operations. It would also emphasize the need for active (if not cautious or skeptical) readings of representations of the past within the archive and beyond.

- Prisoners

In 2005, O'Rawe published his version of the hunger strike in *Blanketmen: The Untold Story of the H-Block Hunger Strike*. In this memoir, he makes the controversial claim that the OC during this period, 'Bik' McFarlane, received details of the government's offer on July 5 through Sinn Féin's national Director of Publicity, Danny Morrison, who had been in communication with "The Mountain Climber." The alleged offer granted the essence of the five demands, but did not yield to free association for the prisoners. Regardless, O'Rawe believed "these proposals formed the basis of a honourable settlement" (O'Rawe 152). McFarlane allegedly shared this sentiment and proceeded to inform the Army Council outside the prison of their decision. However, even though the Army Council only needed to approve the prison leadership's decision before McDonnell's condition worsened, they rejected the offer. O'Rawe claims the

Army Council cited free association as the primary objective of the five demands, while arguing that the offer was detrimentally vague when detailing the other demands (O’Rawe 155). In the end, McDonnell died on July 8 as time ran out and negotiations crumbled.

O’Rawe then boldly contends that the Army Council intentionally sabotaged a decent settlement for the sake of political gain. Sands was elected MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone a month into his strike, and his death prompted a by-election that would be held in August 1981. To the Army Council, the possibility of harnessing public sympathy into political momentum through the August voting period for the Anti H-Block candidate, Owen Carron, was worth the lives of the remaining hunger strikers: “perhaps getting a republican elected in Bobby’s former constituency of Fermanagh/South Tyrone and thus kick-starting the shift away from armed struggle and into constitutional politics was the real reason they balked at accepting what appeared to be a very sellable deal” (O’Rawe 160). Incidentally, Carron won the election and took Sands’ place as MP.

Unsurprisingly, O’Rawe’s revelation was met with controversy. In *The Irish News*, McFarlane produced copies of comms from O’Rawe to discredit his claims in 2010 stating: “The idea that a deal came from Thatcher and was rejected by the outside leadership for political expediency is a total fallacy... His claims of an alleged conversation with me in which I said we'd agreed to a deal is a complete myth” (McCaffrey 6). Hennessey notes that Morrison similarly denied the allegations in *Daily Ireland*: “What Richard O’Rawe has written is repugnant but it has exposed him as a minor figure against the inviolable memory of the hunger strikers, their sacrifices and their greatness” (Hennessey 7). O’Rawe followed *Blanketmen* with *Afterlives: The Hunger Strike and the Secret Offer That Changed Irish History* in 2010, which

unambiguously blames Gerry Adams for the failed July negotiation and subsequent hunger striker deaths.

- “The Mountain Climber” and Archive Growth

Arguments and counter-arguments regarding the alleged July 1981 settlement weave a complex tapestry, including perspectives that I did not address due to scope of this thesis and content availability. “The Mountain Climber’s” narrative would be a valuable contextual addition. After the conflict, businessman Brendan Duddy identified himself as the operative and in 2009, he donated his papers (including diary entries from July 1981) to the National University of Ireland Galway.⁴⁸ Many items are immediately available through digitization, but some notebooks, interview notes, and comms are only accessible in the archive’s reading room.

The Dublin-based Irish Commission for Justice and Peace were also vying for a compromise on the five demands during July, and their involvement complicated both public news releases and private backchannels. Similarly, other key figures have published their accounts of the July 1981 negotiations, while Adams has remained strikingly silent. These perspectives, O’Rawe’s claims, and the materials that have surfaced in their wake (copies of comms sent during this period, PRONI documents, and oral histories) deserve an interactive system that helps users untangle the strands of this narrative while also incorporating source material reliability into their (re)readings.⁴⁹

User-driven lenses

Planning for an archive’s narrative construction can only assume a limited number of interpretations. The archive is, as Lee identified earlier, also stuck between providing

⁴⁸ See www.library.nuigalway.ie/digitalscholarship/projects/brendanduddy/

⁴⁹ The site www.longkesh.info compiles information about the July 1981 offer as bullet points on the site’s landing page. While it is an extensive collection with a helpful index of subjects and publications, it remains difficult to navigate and digest in its entirety.

overwhelming and insufficient amounts of contextual data. Encouraging user engagement with the archive will foster multi-faceted interpretations and readings of its materials, while giving the user agency. They can decide which lenses to use for interpretation while also electing how much data they wish to digest. To foster this level of user-driven discovery, I propose biographic, temporal, and geographic modules to operate independently as contextual markers and function collectively to build dynamic search results. Due to the number of people involved in and around the hunger strike, biographies would be helpful reference points. These could also operate on a sliding scale from brief to more detailed, depending on user needs and preferences. Timelines would similarly display the chronology of events before, during, and after the hunger strike.

Territorial disputes lie at the core of this conflict. A map feature would visualize the relationships between the border and how it divides Northern Ireland from the Republic, the distribution of sectarian communities in Belfast and the dispersal of murals within them, and perhaps the architecture of the prisons in Northern Ireland. Such spatial analysis could be compared to current questions of territory in the post-conflict era, where even in September 2017, the UVF allegedly drove out Catholic families from a new integrated housing community “intended to be a foundation stone for a post-sectarian society” (Kingsley). Comparative analyses of shared symbols would also complicate sectarian boundaries. Although a predominantly loyalist icon, the Red Hand of Ulster also appears on republican murals because it, as Bill Rolston articulates, predates colonization: “For nationalists, the unionist and loyalist appropriation of the symbol of the red hand [...] can be taken as cultural hijacking. From a loyalist point of view, the symbol not only conveys the notion that contemporary loyalists [...] are staunch and brave warriors, but also that Ulster is and always has been different from the rest

of Ireland” (Rolston 7). Mapping the ideological and geographic boundaries between such shared iconography would provide visual components of the conflict’s spatial politics.

Enhanced metadata would support these modules and would foster dynamic combinations of archival materials. For example, who were the PIRA OC’s within the prison and what were they dates they served in that capacity? What public comments did PM Thatcher’s make while in Northern Ireland regarding the hunger strike between March and July 1981? In which murals does the mythological figure Cú Chulainn appear, and what are those murals’ political affiliations? The system’s metadata should support comparative interactions between objects and their contextual data.

Archival guidelines

Including archival practices and procedures as its own module on the site would provide ethical transparency and would embolden users to read the archive as a text. The PMA lists life storytelling, co-ownership, and inclusivity as the pillars of their ethical framework on the archive’s “About Us” page.⁵⁰ The details of each component then articulate the archive’s methodology (open ended, oral interviews), participant involvement (co-ownership of their interviews), and the archive’s narrative structure (actively paralleling experiences despite sectarian affiliation). However, editor and researcher for the PMA, Jolene Mairs Dyer, elaborates on the consequences of this narrative intent: “[T]he editing rationale of inclusivity, personalization and humanization may have excluded more challenging representations of political prisoners or prison staff” (Dyer 171). Based on feedback from an exhibition of select films from the archive, Dyer notes that in at least one instance, “the editing methodology of choosing clips with the aim of producing an empathic response was more likely to be successful

⁵⁰ See www.prisonmemoryarchive.com/about-us/

in audience members without direct experience of violence and imprisonment” (Dyer 171). The inclusivity section of the PMA’s ethical framework reflects this user’s experience, namely that the PMA edited their content to fit within a specific narrative frame. Yet, the consequences of strategically evoking empathy unintentionally excluded conflict survivors from the ideal user population.

The narrative goals of my theoretical archive would similarly emphasize inclusivity through the range of materials and their annotations. The site’s unique functionality, however, will encourage users to (re)read archival items as well as the archive itself. Instead of filtering materials through an emotional construct, I would highlight the potential for users to dictate both how and what they would like to learn about the hunger strike. An archival guidelines section could direct users through the archive and its functionality. Similar to the keyword and controlled language searching instructions suggested above, this module could demonstrate how the archive is structured and how materials interact with each other. This would also be a space to articulate the difference between content and context within archival materials and their metadata. For example, the content of terminologies quoted from first-hand accounts of July 1981 do not necessarily mirror the context of the archive’s metadata and controlled vocabularies.

The above materials reflect direct representations of the hunger strike that are therefore readily appropriate within a hunger strike archive. But where is the line between appropriate and inappropriate archival materials? Since this collection revolves around representations, some of which are creative or artistic, how do we determine the value of interpretive content? In the next section, I discuss archival appraisal before departing from traditional selection methods to further demonstrate the interdisciplinary demands of such a subjective archive.

REPRESENTATIONAL OBJECTS

The archivist is an actor, not a guardian; a performer, not a custodian.

— Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz, “Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance”

Selection and appraisal contribute to an archive’s narrative by assessing potential collection materials.⁵¹ The Society of American Archivists defines this type of evaluation as one of the four pillars of archival work: “Not every record has enduring value, and archivists don’t keep every record that comes their way. Instead, archivists select records, a process that requires an understanding of the historical context in which the records were created, the uses for which they were intended, and their relationships to other sources” (“What are Archives?”). Seemingly straightforward, archival appraisal remains open to both interpretation and execution, with digital archives further complicating contested theoretical approaches.

Regarding Appraisal

Early twentieth-century interpretations of archival appraisal roughly split the field into two camps: as institutions for retaining valuable materials or as institutions for destroying nonvaluable materials.⁵² The debate then progressed to the role of the archivist in appraisal methods; should they take an active or passive role in determining, assigning, and (re)evaluating the significance of archival materials?⁵³ During the mid-twentieth century, this argument pivoted around the nature of “records” versus “archival materials,” the latter of which maintains societal

⁵¹ Selection and appraisal have been examined as separate processes, but for the purposes of this thesis, I address both under the term “archival appraisal.”

⁵² See Reto Tschan’s “A Comparison of Jenkinson and Schellenberg on Appraisal” (2002).

⁵³ Carol Couture details the history of these debates and maps how they played out geographically throughout the twentieth-century in “Archival Appraisal: A Status Report” (2005).

value unlike the former. Using public records, Theodore Schellenberg based this theory of archival permanence first on primary values, which “related to their usefulness as evidence for the creator” and secondary values that “related to their historic and cultural functions for those other than the creator” (Tschan 180). This secondary value system was then split into evidential value—providing proof of an institution’s organization and functions—and informational value, or the “specific subjects dealt with by particular agencies” (Tschan 180). Societal significance within archival value systems evolved during the 1970s, with Hans Booms “framing appraisal issues around society as a whole, the development of social heritage, and the role of the archivist in the development and management of that heritage” (Couture 90). Hugh Taylor and Terry Cook’s appraisal theories also promoted societal significance in their macro-approach to assigning archival value, which “shift[ed] away from content and towards context” (Tschan 188). Today, archival context is present within discussions regarding community archives, digital curation, and the future of archival methodologies in electronic environments.

Questions remain over the scope of the archivist’s influence during the appraisal process. Who should determine cultural value and how is this value qualified? The social justice movement within archives sparked “archival activism,” which encourages archives “to collect records that reflect the lives of ordinary people and not just the dominant few” (Punzalan and Caswell 28). Here, archivists assign value to marginalized communities to better reflect society as a whole.⁵⁴ This movement allows us to reexamine the chimeric qualities of neutrality and objectivity in relation to archival appraisal. Jimerson notes that neutrality is tantamount to passivity, whereas objectivity pushes us to be unbiased while still campaigning for archival social justice. Mark Greene complicates this argument by first critiquing objectivity’s presumed

⁵⁴ Community archives, on the other hand, present a situation where “the role of professional archivist shifts from selector of materials to facilitator of memory work” (Caswell 311).

moral high ground before defending neutrality, since “without the goal of neutrality [...] archivists and their institutions will become completely politicized, the stalking horses or pawns of every stripe of partisan effort” (Greene 312). If both objectivity and neutrality are ever-mutating goals, an ethically transparent approach stabilizes these moving targets: “It has long been my interpretation that objectivity must give way to transparency, wherein historians and archivists are responsible for understanding and making clear their agency in formulating the content and meaning of archives” (Greene 311). As previously discussed, the PMA’s selection, modification, and presentation of recorded interviews influenced the trajectory of the project’s narrative. Yet, the collection’s interpretation of “objectivity”—the inclusion of multiple perspectives as a means to minimize the us/them dichotomy—is transparent and advertises their approach to archival appraisal.

There is no singular appraisal method that is appropriate for any or all archival collections. Richard Cox specifically argues against “a broad theoretical premise – one form fitting all or some kind of universal law – for appraisal,” and instead emphasizes “that archivists need to understand the limitations and more clearly document the purposes and results of their appraisal processes and decisions” (Cox 301). Numerous factors influence the appraisal process (the archival institution, the archivist’s methodologies, the nature of the collection, its presumed impact on society and future research, etc.), suggesting that appraising is largely circumstantial. For the purposes of this thesis, I would like to focus on electronic archives and the subjective nature of literary and artistic interpretation as key factors to developing an archival appraisal method.

Reading Texts and Digital Collections

Virtual reunification creates the potential for any electronic item to be pulled from one source, placed in another, and disseminated to potentially endless users. Speaking from the perspective of digital historiography, an interdisciplinary field of study within digital humanities, Joshua Sternfeld posits that these “enhanced digital capacities have placed more, not less, significance on the selection of historical materials” (Sternfeld 552). He places a strong imperative on “establishing limiting criteria” when faced with the vast digital landscape of possible archival items. Despite this urgency, there is an alarming lack of selection or appraisal policies in digital collection guides and manuals. Jinfang Niu’s extensive study of digital preservation methods notes that even the widely popular OAIS “does not explicitly include appraisal as one function or even a sub-function in its functional model” (Niu 66). Similar digital collection models also pay little attention to selection or appraisal in their guideline frameworks.⁵⁵ Sternfeld suggests a similar problem within his field: “the onslaught of new research tools, spectacular visualizations, massive datasets, and hastily assembled cultural heritage collections has overtaken our capacity to assign scholarly and pedagogical value” (Sternfeld 548). This theme is indicative of a larger concern regarding slowly evolving archival methodologies and the rapidly advancing technologies with which they attempt to keep pace.

Within this digital frame, how do we define, select, appraise, and interpret hunger strike representations? A collection of literary and artistic representations is subjective, and therefore innately open to interpretation. The FLHS mural on one side of this interpretive spectrum arguably exemplifies an easily selected archival item. Steven McQueen’s *Hunger* (2008), Brendan Byrne’s documentary, *Bobby Sands: 66 Days* (2016), an interview between journalist

⁵⁵ Niu proposes a new framework for selection based on a streamlined combination of digital preservation models and selection policies from traditional archives. The latter, she reiterates, have far more extensive notes on material selection and appraisal methodologies.

Peter Taylor and Gerry Adams discussing the influence of the PIRA's propaganda machine on the imprisoned protesters during September 1981, newspaper coverage of Sands' election as MP – these items are all distinctly about the 1981 hunger strike. But what about more ambiguous items? Seamus Heaney's 1996 poem, "The Flight Path, IV," details a chance encounter with Danny Morrison on a train in May 1979. Heaney mentions the dirty protest, but only alludes to the coming hunger strikes through two figures from Dante's *Inferno*. Colum McCann's 2000 novella, "Hunger Strike," is set in Galway and features a young protagonist whose uncle is on hunger strike in the Maze/Long Kesh. This spatial distance reflects McCann's preoccupation with absent, ghostly, or otherwise spectral traumas. Yet, he also uses this distance to link the hunger strikers to the cross-cultural trauma of the Holocaust through the narrator's neighbors, who survived Nazi occupied Lithuania. Inspired by the "fasting girls" phenomenon, Emma Donoghue's *The Wonder* (2016) is set in 1859 Ireland, a mere decade after the Famine. An English nurse, Lib Wright, is sent to the rural Irish Midlands to help verify claims that 11-year-old Anna refuses to eat any food and is therefore a genuine miracle child surviving solely on a diet of "manna from heaven." Confined to a single room throughout much of the novel, Lib is, in Donoghue's own words, "a kind of jailer," watching her charge waste away against the backdrop of the Famine (Simon). The parallel is unmistakable to many readers with a knowledge of Irish hunger striking tradition.

Can these peripheral representations be read as hunger strike texts? If so, how does that reading impact the narrative structure of the archive? If excluded as not relevant, what do we lose in eliminating these spatially and temporally distant portrayals? In the following section, I use Heaney, McCann, and Donoghue to tease out the archive's "limiting criteria" before discussing the costs and benefits of establishing a flexible selection policy versus a stringent

approach to collection development. Through these analyses, I aim to demonstrate the type of content-oriented work needed to include more distant representations within an archival framework.

Heaney and the performance of a ‘sacred drama’

In "The Flight Path, IV," spatial and informational control evoke cyclical, violent archetypes of policing. For each mode of transportation in the poem, there is also a claustrophobic sense of confinement, suggesting that movement itself is inherently tied to oppressive surveillance.⁵⁶ Heaney questions the constructiveness of such informing anxieties through his conflation of Northern Ireland and Dante’s *Inferno*, ending the poem in a space where the tormented damned are ultimately only fighting to oppress each other in hell.

Heaney’s portrayal of Danny Morrison as a pseudo “*film noir* border guard” iconizes the intimidating politics of spatial control:

So he enters and sits down
Opposite and goes for me head on.
‘When, for fuck’s sake, are you going to write
Something for us?’ ‘If I do write something,
Whatever it is, I’ll be writing for myself.’

And that was that. Or words to that effect. (Heaney 385)

Heaney discusses his depiction of Morrison in Dennis O’Driscoll’s *Stepping Stones – Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (2010): “I make the speaker a bit more aggressive than he was at the time, but the presumption of entitlement on his part, which was the main and amazing aspect of that

⁵⁶ This binary parallels Kathryn Conrad’s reading of groups policing themselves when an informer threatens to expose their community’s instabilities in “Stag/nation: Information, Space, and the Numbers Game in the North” (2004).

meeting, is rendered faithfully” (O’Driscoll 257).⁵⁷ Morrison, however, rebukes this version of their encounter on his website:

In ‘Stepping Stones’ [Heaney] says that he felt he was being ‘commanded’ and for that reason changed his mind and didn’t dedicate his Ugolino translation to the prisoners. I find that explanation hard to reconcile with the fact that after our conversation we parted with a handshake, he gave me his address and telephone number and agreed to read the poetry of Bobby Sands [which included criticism of artists and poets for their silence in the face of oppression] and which we were later to publish as the pamphlet ‘Prison Poems’. (Morrison, “Seamus Heaney Disputed”)

In casting Morrison as both the border guard and aggressive train passenger, Heaney conflates the physical repercussions of an illicit border crossing with the morality of the poet as propagandist or silent oppressor.⁵⁸ In attempting to recruit a poet for the cause, the delicate dynamics of a collective community become more threatening than opposing parties within the conflict. If the artist is not a propagandist, he is tantamount to an informer, and communal security “depends on the control of both information and informers” (Conrad 122). The poet’s inadequate or inappropriate informing provokes the border guard to go for the poet “head on” because “these communities must police themselves [...] in order to maintain coherence and control” (Conrad 125). Like the marginalized women and queer individuals in Conrad’s criticism, Heaney positions the non-propogandist poet as a peripheral figure within both the conflict and larger society.

⁵⁷ Heaney also describes the difficult position he faced during this period, including pressure to both write for and denounce the republican cause. See O’Driscoll chapter, “‘To the Edge of the Water’: *Station Island*.”

⁵⁸ Heaney directly addresses avoiding the role of poet propogandist in *Stepping Stones*: “Because of my earlier brush with Mr. Morrison on the train during ‘the dirty protests’, I was highly aware of the propaganda aspect of the hunger strikes and cautious about being enlisted. There was realpolitik at work; but at the same time, you knew you were witnessing something like a sacred drama” (O’Driscoll 259).

This self-policing quickly turns into violent patterns of cannibalism and damnation in the poem's final stanza. The "red-eye special from New York" morphs into the "red eyes" of Ciaran Nugent, and the excrement-covered walls of his cell turn into "something out of Dante's scurry hell." The poem ends with lines from Heaney's translation of Cantos XXXII-XXXIII of *Inferno*: "When he had said all this, his eyes rolled / And his teeth, like a dog's teeth clamping round a bone, / Bit into the skull and again took hold" (Heaney 386). When Dante and Virgil see Count Ugolino in the Circle of Treachery, he is frozen up to his neck beside Ruggieri, who imprisoned Ugolino with his sons and grandsons. Left to starve in a cell, Ugolino desperately ate the flesh of his own kin before eventually dying. Though both damned men were political traitors during their lifetimes, Ugolino seeks no responsibility for his actions, instead wishes only to continue his eternal gnawing on Ruggieri's skull. Heaney appropriates the cyclical brutality of filial cannibalism to criticize the unapologetic violence of militant republicanism.⁵⁹

Much like the cyclical depiction of feudal violence, the relationship between mobility and border crossing emphasizes the unyielding power of surveillance. Conrad's "regulation of bodies" intertwines with Heaney's portrayal of the poet, revealing bodies and language as the infrastructure of Northern Ireland's geopolitical turf war. The poet feels his "trip north taking sweet hold like a chain / On every bodily sprocket," as the imagery of eyes connote the true chains of constant surveillance. The refrain "safe as houses" is a false reassurance, as they are likely about as safe as hell itself. This is Conrad's stag/nation, where inter-communal policing gridlocks society. The repeating pattern of cannibalism is a grotesque societal reflection of the hunger strikers' bodies as they ultimately consumed themselves.

⁵⁹ This eternal feud culminates in what Joseph Heininger describes as "self-starvation, national starvation, false martyrdom, and death" (Heininger 62).

Heaney's poem delineates Ireland's visceral border politics. Although a tangential representation of the hunger strike, it portrays the cultural pressure at least one artist faced during the span of the conflict. The tension between creating loyal, subservient, or oppressive art provides a possible explanation for the spatial and temporal distance of other literary hunger strike works. If distance functions as a creative strategy, should an archival appraisal policy follow suit in its collection of artistic representations? Moving away from the core of the hunger strike necessitates broader interpretations and could create an unmanageable collection of materials. Practically, these tangential items would require the most labor to annotate and contextualize. On the other hand, flexible borders of the archive's limiting criteria would encompass a greater number of representations that mirror the nuances of the hunger strike's impact.

The Famine's reach

McCann's novella reflects a social paralysis that plays out through the sparse landscape of hunger strike fiction. It takes place largely within Galway and gives the reader only brief glimpses of the hunger strike. The displaced protagonist, thirteen-year-old Kevin, angrily exists in liminal spaces. His mother physically removes him from their Derry home to escape the conflict's violence, and he yearns to return to the North and familiar surroundings. He is trapped between childhood and adulthood, wearing his dead father's oversized clothes and hoping the local teenagers recognize him "with a certain awe and feel a shiver and know him to be a hard man" after his uncle, whom he has never met, goes on hunger strike (McCann, *Novella* 81). Intellectual and informational chasms confine Kevin as his mom divulges sparse news from Belfast and he struggles to comprehend the hunger strike's politics through snippets overheard on the radio or glimpsed on newspaper headlines. Kevin tries to reconcile these negative spaces

by going on his own hunger strike, reconstructing his uncle's prison cell within the confines of the similarly proportional caravan he now shares with his mother, and creating a medical chart to track what he imagines are his uncle's vital signs. Ultimately, he can only resolve these frustrations through a series of his own violent rebellions.

The text's distant trauma is populated with, as Alison Garden identifies, the codified figure of the skeletal body. Emblematic of the Famine, the hunger strikers' bodies also draw cross-cultural connections throughout McCann's text:

The skeletal body is one such symbol that reflects the formal codification of the Holocaust. This codified symbol is shared with the most common symbol of the Irish Famine—a vision of the emaciated body that [Chris] Morash has labelled the 'stalking spectre'. There are complete narratives that we would associate with both the Holocaust and the Famine but the image of the skeletal body acts as visual somatic shorthand for both. (Garden 175)

There are several allusions to the Lithuanian couple's past before becoming Kevin's neighbors. After Kevin details his uncle's condition, the man reveals "that he too had been unhappy as a boy for a reason that no longer mattered, that his joy now was in simple things that needed no memory" (McCann, *Novella* 166). The couple also chastise Kevin upon noticing the self-inflicted tattoo on his forefinger. The shadows of emaciated bodies, however, cast a striking parallel. Though McCann distances the reader from clear depictions of either the hunger strike or the Holocaust, their shared skeletal imagery presumes a widely understood traumatic past.

Where McCann stretches across trauma's geographic borders, Emma Donoghue reaches into Ireland's past and uses the horrors of the Famine to expose the nuances of Anna's fast. She consciously refuses food less than a decade after an estimated one million people unwilling

starved during the Famine. Catholicism also features prominently in Anna's anorexia mirabilis. As one reviewer of Donoghue's novel notes while discussing the legacies of religious fasting women: "For these women, fasting allowed them to exert a greater level of control over their lives. It was also a way to avoid marriage and childbearing" (Limprecht). Yet, Lib slowly discovers that Anna's fast is linked the child's past trauma of incestuous sexual abuse and the death of her abuser, a horrific instance of familial consumption. Donoghue's Famine memory shifts the focus away from external British oppression and reinforces a more intimate injustice, where the Irish exploit and consume their own.

Anna's starving body is simultaneously dismissed, surveilled, and confined. Could we compare this bodily signifier with the female protesters and hunger strikers in Armagh Prison? Begoña Aretxaga thoroughly critiques the gender politics in Northern Irish society and within the republican movement during the Troubles. When Armagh women detailed their personal experiences of the dirty protest, which included menstruation, they were met with disgust and rejection: "What the Nationalist community did not understand and could not cope with was *women's* pain. Not a mother's suffering, which ultimately roused the emotions of Nationalist people in support of the prisoners. Nor the suffering of incarcerated young men, whose image, naked and beaten, resembled that of Jesus Christ" (Aretxaga 140, original emphasis).

Unsurprisingly, the young fasting girls in centuries past were threatened with force feeding, and described as "hysterical" or, in one article from 1869, as shrill tricksters.⁶⁰ And despite three Armagh women going on hunger strike in 1980, relatively few representations of this protest exist. Emilie Pine criticizes the documentary *66 Days* for not mentioning female protesters or even interviewing a woman in the documentary. She argues that "the absence of women's stories

⁶⁰ See Ruth Scurr's review of *The Wonder*, "The Dreams and the Demons of Fasting" (2017).

and women's voices suggests, firstly, that the Troubles period of Irish history was predominantly experienced by men and, secondly, that this history and its impact can only be assessed by men" (Pine). Various lenses can interpret the intricacies of Northern Ireland's gender politics, particularly within the republican movement. Yet, Donoghue's text encourages an examination of the starving female body and the cultural signifiers that surround it. The silenced figures in Heaney, McCann, and Donoghue's texts all evoke forms of societal self-consumption, wherein seemingly tangential and/or marginalized bodies are used to publicize the same hegemonic narratives that are consuming them.

Appraising Artifacts and Contexts

These texts represent commentary on artistic creation and surveillance during a time of conflict, the geographic limitlessness of trauma, and the Famine as an entry point to Northern Irish social and cultural critique, respectively. The reverberations of the Famine's impact can be read through the hunger strike, but does that mean we should read every Famine text as one also about the hunger strike? On the same note, is every poem or story written during or about the Troubles tangentially close enough to the hunger strike to qualify them as relevant for this archive? In an earlier stage of development, my imagined appraisal policy classified possible archival artifacts as strictly "hunger strike materials." This phraseology eliminates tangential interpretations, but other archival collections with similarly stringent selection and appraisal policies effectively balance highly localized narratives with universal impact.⁶¹ Yet, I believe a broader approach along contextual lines—"does this item illuminate aspects of the hunger strike"—would elucidate complex cultural, historical, and social issues at play. These peripheral items will likely be challenging to define, classify, and structure within the archive, but their

⁶¹ See Sternfeld's analysis of *The Valley of the Shadow's* selection process.

inclusion will highlight previously obscured perspectives, which remains a long-term goal for this archive.

McCann's creative process when writing "Hunger Strike" similarly transitioned from the hyper-specific to the universal:

At first I tried to write the story very close to the prisoner. I spent months finding out what happens to a body on hunger strike, what the conditions were like inside the prison, and so on. I sat in libraries and read endless medical accounts of hunger strikes. I wanted to set it as close to the body as possible. But in the end I couldn't write it this way. I wasn't being honest. I was conjuring up all sorts of strange scenarios. And then I remembered what it was like to be a teenager during those years (I was 16 at the time) – and so this teenager came to me and he seemed to be the correct vessel to carry all the grief and loss and contradiction. (McCann, "Interview")

I hope to establish appraisal criteria that encompass art forms as commentary on the hunger strike's effects and its wide-reaching scope. To do otherwise would ignore the cultural, social, and historical repercussions of the hunger strike itself.

Potential archival materials should not be evaluated in the absence of an appraisal committee. Such a committee would bring various perspectives to the appraisal process while also distributing the interpretive labor. In terms of content creation, the above examples demonstrate the analytical endeavors needed to bridge the spatial and/or temporal gaps. At this stage, however, an evaluative framework for potential items should classify their direct or indirect representational qualities:

- Direct representations of the 1981 hunger strike include images of the protesters or their likenesses, prisoners' writings, hunger strike films (documentary or feature), songs about the hunger strike or hunger strikers, journalistic coverage, etc.
- Indirect representations include:
 - Cultural tropes; examples include the Great Famine, Catholic martyrdom, republican rebellion, historical figures, etc.
 - Social implications; examples include gender politics, artistic freedom, communal trauma, etc.
 - Indirect representations must then relate back to the hunger strike in the form of a contextual annotation. Context for sources used or figures referenced must also include their own contextual analyses.
 - Indirect representations also must be unique additions to the collection. If a similar representation or commentary exists, the submission must delineate any differences or determine if the item should be presented as supplementary or linked through a relationship with an existing item.
- Spatial and temporal markers, where space indicates the work's setting and time indicates the creation date as well as setting's date.
- Excluded items; any potential archival items that are proposed and subsequently excluded from the collection will be listed along with reason(s) for their rejection.

The archive's structural architecture would also aid in evaluating and displaying peripheral interpretations through special and temporal delimiters. This could generate a useful data visualization for users while providing a secondary boundary for limiting criteria.

The above qualities are not exhaustive and should serve as a template for evaluation. Ultimately, the goal of this framework is to illuminate the hunger strike and its effects through cultural forms. If the creators of these representations identify distance (both spatially and temporally) as a necessary element in their portrayals, then any archive attempting to capture the breadth of the hunger strike should embrace that imperative. The above framework not only accepts such an approach, but also utilizes the mutability of artistic interpretations as a defining mission and architectural construct to effectively mirror the scope of the protest.

CONCLUSIONS

A conscious effort to document a multiplicity of perspectives, even those perspectives which we find abhorrent, such as the perspectives of those considered to be perpetrators, allows for a more complete view of the past and helps us to resist the temptation to promote singular crystallized narratives about complicated pasts. Only by embracing multiple and conflicting perspectives across a variety of formats are archives able to capture a wider portion of society's views and spark debate.

— Michelle Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives"

I positioned this framework at the intersection of archives and digital humanities to address the complexities of representing a violent protest. Contextual intricacies of the 1981 hunger strike would overwhelm the traditional aspects of information architecture that, by design, eliminate ambiguity and contradiction. Introducing literary and cultural analyses to an archival structure will enrich (re)readings of representational materials, which will then encourage evolving interpretations.

A responsive archival system is pivotal in a Northern Irish setting, where abstract concepts like reconciliation are constantly fluctuating—indeed, seemingly concrete systems like governmental bodies reach political impasses and suspensions. The continuous impact of sectarianism has also emerged in new forms of violence. A 2017 study coined the term Belfast Limb Arterial and Skeletal Trauma (BLAST) to describe the evolution of "simple" gunshot wounds (punishment shootings or "knee-capping") to injuries "specifically targeted by the perpetrators to disrupt major arteries and skeletal elements at multiple sites to produce devastating and often irreparable injuries" (Lau, M. et al.). Although these attacks are not widespread, they represent the continuity of self-policing communities. Sinead O'Shea's 2017

documentary, *A Mother Brings Her Son to Be Shot*, similarly exposes the visceral realities of “post”-conflict Northern Ireland and the lived experiences of communities that still value the weight and implications of “informing” amongst other social transgressions.⁶² The looming geopolitics of Brexit question border stability and has reinvigorated cultural debates; for example, a proposed Irish Language Act “has become a proxy for these broader identity disputes” as recently as March 2018 (McCulloch and Murtagh). The shifting nature of Northern Ireland demands an archive that can reflect evolving narratives and sociography.

Numerous issues addressed throughout this thesis revolve around interdisciplinary studies and collaboration. Annotating hundreds of archival items would not only be logistically laborious for one person, but it would also restrict the archive’s perspective. Consciously setting aside bias is the least that this archive deserves. Caswell’s emphasis on communal participation and shared stewardship should apply to the construction of a controlled language, the formation of a multi-party appraisal committee, and community outreach. To an extent, I can provide the “aboutness” of an item through my experience with cultural criticism and descriptive cataloging. Collaborating with local heritage organizations, libraries, and museums could foster opportunities with community leaders for direct engagement with Northern Irish society and as a path towards defining an item’s “fromness.” Partnering with these local institutions could also encourage shared surrogate records to increase collection growth (and perhaps help bypass lengthy intellectual property requests). Acting as a repository steward instead of the sole content creator could also embolden local individuals (scholars, artists, community leaders, librarians, archivists, etc.) to contribute item annotations, descriptions, and vocabularies that more accurately reflect the subject matter of the archive.

⁶² The titular mother in this documentary, for example, delivered her son to a non-fatal punishment shooting because he allegedly sold drugs.

Future Research

My proposed framework requires numerous implementation standards before I can publish this archive. I detail the points in this section under the assumption that the community engagement and institutional collaboration above will further shape the ultimate product.

Since this archive aims to collect and host surrogate records of various artistic, governmental, and documentary works, attaining intellectual property permissions is essential. If legal acquisitions prevent the collection of an item, the archive will not host or represent it. Possible funding and institutional affiliations would likely influence intellectual property requests, but I would still like to acknowledge the limitations and restrictions of hosting copyrighted materials. Considering possible institutional biases, any associated stipulations or regulations will deserve consideration in relation to the ultimate goals of this project; funding and collaborative opportunities should be thoroughly analyzed. These administrative tasks should also include writing an accessible and detailed archival mission statement. Not only will this govern archival labor, but it will also demonstrate a transparent approach to collecting, describing, and arranging the collection's materials for users.

Technical requirements include preservation planning, establishing a metadata schema and standard, and developing a culturally responsive controlled vocabulary. Dublin Core and MODS are appropriate schemas for this archive due to their flexibility and interoperability. Enhanced Dublin Core elements would also provide the option of more detailed indexing. The data content standard Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO) was created specifically to describe cultural heritage works and their surrogate records, and is used in libraries, cultural heritage institutions, and museums.⁶³ This standard's unique applicability to this archive includes its

⁶³ See Erin Coburn et al.'s "The Cataloging Cultural Objects Experience: Codifying Practice for the Cultural Heritage Community" (2010).

emphasis on describing material culture, architecture, and an array of art forms and commemorative sites. CCO standards would foster robust descriptions of the Maze/Long Kesh prison or other physical monuments honoring the 1981 hunger strikers and would capture the range of material types that would populate this archive.

Finally, the long-term goals of this project require maintaining an awareness of cultural, political, sociological, psychological, archival, and technological shifts. New perspectives constantly emerge, technology progresses, and archival methodologies evolve.⁶⁴ This archive should not be published and forgotten, but should continue to reflect our changing understanding of how we document and interpret history. Digital archives must continue questioning how users comprehend their collections, particularly if those collections attempt to reflect ethnographic communities. While field work has not yet answered these concerns, creating a flexible archival framework will reflexively adapt to social and cultural changes. Historical narratives evolve and so should the systems that aim to document them.

⁶⁴ As recently as February 2018, Tom Murtagh, an officer in The Maze/Long Kesh during the Troubles, published his version of events in *The Maze Prison: A Hidden Story of Chaos, Anarchy and Politics*.

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