

A CONTRIBUTION TO FÉILE AN PHOBAIL AUGUST 2020

BY NÍALL MEEHAN

‘She is a Protestant as well’

Distilling British Propaganda
in accounts of the death of Kate Carroll in April 1921

Analysis of historical research by

Terence Dooley

Fearghal McGarry

Anne Dolan

Diarmaid Ferriter

Eunan O’Halpin

Marie Coleman

Brian Hanley

Tim Wilson

*Kate Carroll was a Protestant who the
IRA murdered*

*A person of no social consequence, a
middle aged Protestant spinster*

*She was fined by a republican court
for making poitin*

*IRA men were intent on hounding her
out of business*

*The charge of spying was a
convenient rationale for executing an
obvious antisocial security risk*

She pestered an IRA volunteer

*She had amorous intent towards an
IRA man*

*She had a notion one might marry her
Was this really about spying?*

*You can argue that she was killed
because she was a nuisance to a man*

*You can argue she was killed because
she was a Protestant*

She might be a spy, she might not

*There might be some personal
grievance, there might not*

*This woman sent demented letters
again & again to the RIC*

*She gave information about rival poitin
makers, not about the IRA*

A woman of feeble intellect

*The most notorious killing of a
destitute semi-literate distiller*

*Her marginal status and intimate
factors contributed to her death*

*Under Irish nationalism’s sanitised
surface was a sequence of dirty deeds*

***Contains the real reason why Kate Carroll in Monaghan was one
of three women executed by the IRA between 1919-21***

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THE AUBANE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

‘SHE IS A PROTESTANT AS WELL’

Distilling British propaganda in accounts of the 1921 IRA execution
of Kate Carroll in County Monaghan

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| Table of Contents | Page |
|--|------|
| 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 2 Protestants, North vs South | 2 |
| 3 Monaghan Protestants and Kate Carroll | 5 |
| 3.1 Terrence Dooley's analysis | 5 |
| 3.2 Fearghal McGarry's analysis | 6 |
| 3.3 Anne Dolan's analysis | 7 |
| 3.4 'Etiquette' of war | 9 |
| 3.5 Replication | 10 |
| 4 'Propaganda by News' | 10 |
| 4.1 Republican Testimony | 11 |
| 5 Post-Protestant | 12 |
| 5.1 Eunan O'Halpin's analysis | 13 |
| 5.2 Quiet correction | 16 |
| 5.3 Extra-mural outperform the tenured | 17 |
| 5.4 Terence Dooley's correction | 17 |
| 5.5 Historians and sectarian violence | 18 |
| 5.6 Fearghal McGarry reintroduces Kate Carroll | 19 |
| 6 Conclusion | 21 |

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THE AUBANE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

‘She is a Protestant as well’

Distilling British propaganda in accounts of the 1921 IRA execution of Kate Carroll in County Monaghan

Níall Meehan

1 Introduction

In retelling the story of the 1919–21 Irish War of Independence, as fighting recedes to a place beyond memory, accounts of eyewitnesses have given way to those of the academic historian. We move, it is argued, from the limited perspective of participant partisans to the deliberative professional sifter, who searches the archives to arrive at a dispassionate and more holistic account of what ‘really happened’. As a result, Irish history is reputedly based on a new maturity that knocks icons off pedestals. In the *Cambridge History of Ireland* (2018), Fearghal McGarry wrote that new “revisionist” accounts, ‘present[...] a more complex picture of the revolution at its grassroots’. They incorporate ‘wider strands of sectarian, agrarian and intra-communal conflict’.¹

Would that it were so straightforward.

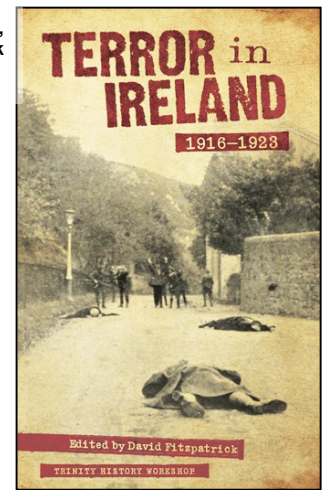
The Trinity History Workshop book, *Revolution? Ireland 1917–1923* (1990), edited by the late David Fitzpatrick, was such an exercise in reinterpretation. Republican ‘activists had fairly simple and commonplace notions of their nationality’, he wrote. Furthermore, ‘their mass mobilisation ... impeded the expression of social radicalism, and ... menaced groups identified as peripheral to the Irish Nation’.² Such commentary created an impression of mainly Roman Catholic Irish Republican Army (IRA) volunteers who were simple-minded, relatively unsophisticated and prone to prejudice. *Terror in Ireland 1916–1923*, a 2012 Workshop publication, made similar points but changed tack. No longer troubled by an absence of social radicalism, the volume aligned with a fresh burst of ‘terrorology’ after 9/11. Fitzpatrick, again the editor, concentrated on a ‘republican terrorism’, which sought, ‘vengeance against ... detested groups’:

... based on categorical assumptions about the unpatriotic disposition and corruptibility of groups such as declared ‘loyalists’, Freemasons, Orangemen, ex-servicemen, military deserters, ex-policemen, those associated in any way with Crown forces or adminis-

tration, and, most contentiously, Protestants.³

The Trinity Workshop taxonomy of pariah groups did not initially include Protestants. Indeed, in 1989 Fitzpatrick noted that ‘despite provocation, few attacks on southern Protestants were reported... though many vacant houses were burned’. Edward Micheau’s 1990 chapter came closest. It reported during the first half of 1921 in Monaghan, ‘several outbreaks of sectarian violence’ between the IRA and unionist paramilitary forces. In 1990 the late Peter Hart asserted that IRA volunteers, ‘zealous in defence of their perception of the proper social and moral order’, gave ‘short shrift’ to ‘adulterers, wife beaters, drunkards and tramps’. Jane Leonard’s chapter nominated as primary targets Irishmen who had served in British forces during World War One.⁴

Hart, in particular, pursued these themes. In a 1993 edited collection he extended the IRA target list to Protestants. He added, for good measure, unmarried mothers and mixed marriage couples. A 1996 chapter in *Unionism in Modern Ireland* accused the IRA in south Leinster and Munster of pursuing Protestants in ‘campaigns of what might be termed “ethnic cleansing”’. Fitzpatrick’s *The Two Irelands* two years later added homosexuals and divorced people, including (as in 2012) ‘most contentiously, Protestants’. That year Hart published his controversial PhD-based study, *The IRA and its Enemies*. It concentrated on alleged targeting of Cork Protestants. Prostitutes and Jews were appended to the list of those the IRA were said to have opposed.⁵ These putative victims were portrayed as at the margins in Irish society.



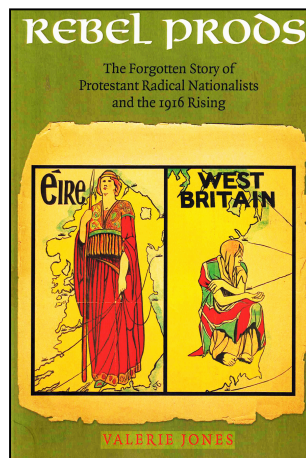
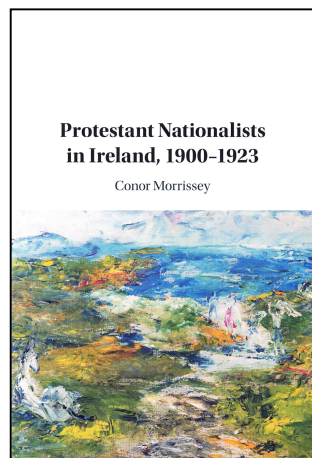
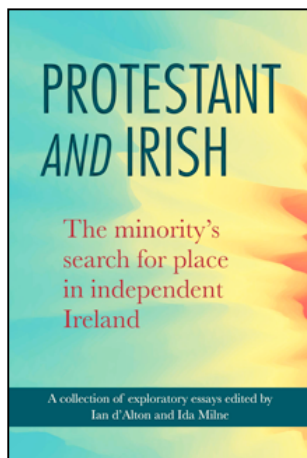
³ David Fitzpatrick (ed.), ‘Introduction’, *Terror in Ireland, 1916–1923*, Lilliput, 2012, p4. For a critical review (including David Fitzpatrick, Eve Morrison, responses) Níall Meehan, *Reviews in History*, <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1303>; Meehan ‘Reply to Professor David Fitzpatrick and to Dr Eve Morrison’s response’, <https://www.Academia.edu/1994527/>. In the book, Brian Hanley’s contribution implicitly questioned Fitzpatrick’s narrow understanding of the term, ‘terrorism’, ‘Terror in Twentieth Century Ireland’, pp10–25.

⁴ David Fitzpatrick, ‘Ireland since 1870’, in Roy Foster (ed.), *Oxford illustrated History of Ireland*, OUP, 1989, p246. Edward Micheau, ‘Sectarian conflict in Monaghan; Peter Hart, ‘Youth Culture and the IRA’; Jane Leonard, ‘Getting Them at Last, the IRA and Ex-Servicemen’; in *Revolution?*, pp21–22, 115, 120. The conflict in Monaghan will be considered later.

⁵ Peter Hart, ‘Class, community and the Irish Republican Army in Cork, 1917–1923’, in Patrick O’Flanagan, Cornelius Buttner (eds), *Cork History & Society*, Geography Publ., 1993, p977. Peter Hart, ‘The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Southern Ireland’, in English, Walker, eds, *Unionism in Modern Ireland 1912–1939*, Palgrave, 1996, p92; David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912–1939*, OUP, 1998, p95. Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies*, OUP, 1998, pp150, 183, 298, 310, 311, 314. For an alternative depiction and critique of Hart’s approach: John Borogonovo, *Spies, Informers and the ‘Anti-Sinn Féin Society’*, the *Intelligence War in Cork City*, IAP, 2007; Regan, *Myth and the Irish State*; Meda Ryan, *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, Mercier, 2003.

¹ Fearghal McGarry, introduction to ‘Revolution, 1916–1923’, Chapter 9, Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *Cambridge History of Ireland*, Volume 4, CUP, 2018, p259–60 (generally, pp258–61). For a critique of revisionist methodologies, John Regan, *Myth and the Irish State*, IAP, 2013.

² David Fitzpatrick (ed.), ‘Preface’, *Revolution? Ireland 1917–1923* (1990). Trinity History Workshop, 1990, p7.



POGROM DENOUNCED

At a largely attended meeting of the Protestants of various denominations in the parish of Schull the following resolution was unanimously adopted and arrangements made for its insertion in the public press:—

"That we members of different Protestant Churches in the parish of Schull condemn the atrocious crimes recently committed in the North of Ireland. We dissociate ourselves from the acts of violence committed against our Roman Catholic fellow countrymen. Living as a small minority in the South, we wish to place on record the fact that we have lived in harmony with the Roman Catholic majority and that we have never been subjected to any oppression or injustice as a result of different religious beliefs."

Rev. G. B. Fairbrother, who presided, paid a warm tribute to the courtesy and consideration which he, in an experience of nearly 40 years, had always received from his R. C. fellow countrymen.

Others speakers who testified to the absence of sectarian strife, and who spoke in favour of the resolution, were Mrs. J. Attridge, Messrs. J. A. Sheppard, A. J. Cocks, G. H. Pattison, and S. J. Whitley.

Southern Star 29 April 1922, typical southern Protestant view

Martin Maguire (in *Protestant and Irish*), Conor Morrissey, Valerie Jones: analysis of Protestant republicans and nationalists during 1900-23 period

Irish society then, like now, was unequal. Promoting sectarian and other issues to the forefront of a hitherto unrevealed, 'hidden', history was thought not just academically rigorous but a much-needed exercise in healthy self-questioning. It resembled a left-wing critique. Kevin Myers asserted, in commentary on Hart's contribution to *Revolution?*, that IRA 'morality police' did what the newly independent Irish state later institutionalised. Given the TCD research it seemed a reasonable, if forcibly articulated, point. Had ISIS then been in existence, the IRA would probably have been compared with it.⁶

Serious evidential shortcomings, however, undermined the new claims. Paul Taylor's *Heroes or Traitors?* (2015) argued persuasively that 'southern Irish soldiers returning from the Great War' were not IRA targets. Some who claimed such persecution did so within bogus 'southern loyalist' compensation applications to the British government.⁷ Likewise, despite having achieved sound-bite status, claims that the IRA attacked unmarried mothers, mixed marriage couples, adulterers, divorced people, prostitutes, Jews and homosexuals, were soon, albeit silently, abandoned. Contradicting his former self in 2003, Hart wrote that southern Ireland did not experience ethnic cleansing. In 2006 he mistakenly asserted that he never said otherwise, but he still maintained that Protestants were persecuted.⁸

2. Protestants, North vs South

The republican sectarianism thesis faced a hurdle. Many southern Protestant communities, mostly Church of Ireland

(Anglican), and their often unionist-inclined spokespersons, refuted Ulster unionist assertions that they were mistreated. They criticised the same unionists for attacks on northern Roman Catholics. In 2019 Martin Maguire detailed independent minded Protestant men and women who participated actively on the republican side during the conflict. If anti-British resistance was anti-Protestant, then in all probability significant numbers of southern Protestants would have said so, openly.⁹ A segment of the southern loyalist population did assert victimhood status, on the basis of opposition, both passive and aggressive, to the IRA's campaign. In the mid to late 1920s, what were referred to as 'diehard' loyalists and their allies in the imperial right in Britain persuaded the UK government to fund confidential compensation claims.¹⁰

The settled southern Protestants view was delivered in 1924 by TCD Provost Henry Bernard, a 'convinced unionist' and former Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin: 'it has been qua loyalist and not qua Protestant that the members of the Church of Ireland have suffered'. The

⁹ Martin Maguire, 'Protestant Republicans in the Revolution and After', in Ian d'Alton, Ida Milne (eds), *Protestant and Irish, the Minority's search for place in independent Ireland*, Cork UP, 2019. See on southern Protestant opposition to Ulster unionist sectarianism: Niall Meehan, 'Examining Peter Hart', *Field Day Review* 10, 2014, pp133-46; *The Embers of Revisionism*, Aubane, 2017, pp18-23. The killing in West Cork of 13 Protestant civilians, three British intelligence officers and their driver, over 26-9 April 1922, gave rise to short-lived, apprehension. A debate Hart initiated in 1998 is ongoing on whether the civilian killings were sectarian. For differing approaches, notes 23, 24.

¹⁰ The confidential nature of southern loyalist applications to the Irish Grants Committee (IGC) facilitated claims by Free State senators Sir John Keane and John Bagwell, whose substantial dwellings were burned in reprisal for Free State executions during the Civil War. The IGC rejected their claims, as the pairs' misfortune was not, at that stage, due to loyalty to the British government, Gemma Clarke, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War*, CUP, 2014, pp53, 70-72 (see also note 17). On the other hand the Methodist former Crown Solicitor for Cork, Jasper Wolfe, later Independent TD for West Cork, was personally successful to the tune of £3,000 (worth approximately €211,000 today) and in relation to many other applications he formulated. Leigh-Ann Coffey, *The Price of Loyalty: Southern Irish Loyalists and the Work of the Irish Grants Committee*, PhD Thesis, Queen's University, Ontario, Canada, 2014, p208. Wolfe insisted he was an IRA target due to his official position, that had no sectarian connotation. An IRA officer who had attempted to kill him later became Wolfe's best friend, Jasper Ungood Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen*, Collins, 2008, pp143, 221.

⁶ Kevin Myers, 'An Irishman's Diary', *Irish Times*, 23 May 1990. In 2016 Brian Hanley noted that Roy Foster's *Vivid Faces* (Penguin, 2015), 'cannot resist comparing [1916 leader Patrick] Pearse's school St Enda's to an Islamic fundamentalist training camp'. 'Moderates and Peacemakers': Irish Historians and the Revolutionary Centenary', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 2016, v43, n1, p118.

⁷ Paul Taylor, *Heroes or Traitors? Experiences of southern Irish soldiers returning from the Great War 1919-1939*, Liverpool UP, 2015, p243.

⁸ Peter Hart, *The IRA at War*, OUP, 2003, p246; letter, *Irish Times*, 28 June 2006 (see also Niall Meehan, 23 June, 3 July, plus note 5). IRA suspicion of tramps was due to British intelligence officers effecting tramp and vagrant disguises, Pádraig Ó Ruairc, 'Spies and informers beware', IRA executions of alleged civilian spies during the War of Independence', in Crowley, Ó Drisceoil, Murphy, Borghonovo (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, Cork UP, pp435-6.

Irish Times concurred in 1935: loyalists had suffered 'not for their faith but for their political views'.¹¹

Protestants in southern Ireland were also, financially speaking, far from marginal. The weekly *Church of Ireland Gazette* observed on 19 May 1922 that 'the Protestant community holds a commanding position in the [south's] economic life'. The religious minority's socio-economic status was a colonial residue. It stemmed primarily from Protestant settlements in various parts of Ireland, the most successful of which endured in the province of Ulster. Roman Catholic dispossession during the 17th Century, followed by penal laws, failed to transform Ireland into a Protestant nation. Protestant privilege survived the erosion, but not elimination, of discrimination against the confessional majority during the 19th Century. Unsurprisingly, Protestant churches and most Protestants retained a British allegiance.¹²

In increasingly industrialised northeast Ulster, a low-church settler-colonial mentality enabled the creation of a Protestant all-class alliance. Britain partitioned Northern Ireland from the rest of the country in 1920. The new territory was sustained by its two-thirds Protestant (mainly Presbyterian and Anglican) majority. Southern Ireland's smaller Protestant population, which opposed partition, sensed that northern co-religionists cared sufficiently about their alleged plight to make propaganda from it, but little more.¹³ Nationalist inclusivity made continual inroads into Protestant communities that, since the late 18th Century, had retained a significant republican tradition.¹⁴

The prospect and then realisation in 1922 of substantive independence from Crown control gave rise to discomfiting thoughts of tables being turned. Fears of more equitable wealth distribution intertwined with an

under-researched phenomenon, an upsurge in free-enterprise criminality. That was early in 1922, after a republican split over the Anglo-Irish Treaty, and before the civil war. Many criminals pretended to be IRA inspired and targeted Protestant haves more so than Catholic have-nots. While untypical, it is indicative that this included, according to the 19 and 30 May 1922 *Freeman's Journal*, an attempt by Protestant criminals from Cork to extort 'in the name of the IRA', £300 from a Protestant farmer in Tipperary.¹⁵

Though the conflict was accompanied by industrial unrest, advances in trade union organisation and land seizures, fears of expropriation proved groundless.¹⁶ Having defeated anti Anglo-Irish Treaty opponents in the 1922-23 Civil War, the Irish Free State was far from socialist. Neither was it intent on doing to Protestants what Roman Catholics suffered in Northern Ireland.

In 1922 the new Free State government nominated to its 60-member senate, 20 Protestants, three Quakers and one Jew. It was generous gesture, particularly given that six more Protestants (including another Quaker) went to the trouble of being elected. Appearing to ignore the Jewish senator, the *Church of Ireland Gazette* noted on 15 December, 'virtually 50 per cent of members belong to the minority'. The initiative was also ideological. The nominees were 'for the most part [...] landowners and former southern unionists', of whom 'seven were peers and five were baronets'.¹⁷ In his earliest contribution to Irish history, 'Yeats in the Senate' (1972), David Fitzpatrick wrote of 'the merchants, lawyers and bankers who dominated it'. Betraying no hint of later concerns, he noted a 'Protestant camp ... united only in filial piety for the dispenser of privilege and comfort'. More 'vigorous members' of 'the former ascendancy' had, he wrote, 'one common ambition, to work together for their common preservation, to win by

¹¹ 'The Church since disestablishment', 'Ugly symptoms', *Irish Times*, 14 January 1924, 22 July 1935. John Henry Bernard, https://www.tcd.ie/provost/history/former-provosts/jh_bernard.php (accessed, 20 May 2020). In 1916 Bernard recommended 'swift retributive justice untempered by mercy', for Easter Rebellion leaders, in Denis Donoghue, 'T.C.D.', *We Irish*, Knopf, 1986, p171. Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England*, CUP, 2014, pp208-16.

¹² On 'the largest single shift in land ownership anywhere in Europe during the early modern period', Micheál Ó Siochru, *God's Executioner, Oliver Cromwell and the Conquest of Ireland*, Faber, 2009, p248. For similarly summarised view, related to Northern Ireland, John McGarry, Brendan O'Leary, 'Under friendly and less friendly Fire', in Rupert Taylor (ed.), *Consociational Theory, McGarry and O'Leary and the Northern Ireland conflict*, Routledge, 2009, p386. See Fergus Campbell, *The Irish Establishment*, OUP, 2009, for an account of considerable wealth held within upper echelons of the Protestant community during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. On Church of Ireland opposition to Home Rule, Andrew Scholes, *The Church of Ireland and the Third Home Rule Bill*, IAP, 2009. On the maintenance of Protestant privilege in southern Ireland up to the 1960s and 1970s, Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic State* (1983). In addition, updating Bowen, Niall Meehan, 'Shorthand for Protestants, sectarian advertising in the *Irish Times*', *History Ireland*, v17 n5, Sep-Oct 2009.

¹³ Pamela Clayton, *Enemies and Passing Friends: settler ideologies in twentieth-century Ulster*, Pluto, 1996; Michael Farrell, *The Orange State* (2nd ed.), Pluto, 1986. Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism*, Historical Association, 1973, pp29-31.

¹⁴ See Valerie Jones, *Rebel Prods: The Forgotten Story of Protestant Radical Nationalists and the 1916 Rising*, Ashfield Press, 2016; Martin Maguire, 'Protestant Republicans'. Buckland, *Unionism*, p41.

¹⁵ Robert Kee, *The Green Flag*, Vol III, 1972, p163. Fiona Hughes, 'Nationalist Politics in Monaghan from 1918 to the Civil War', in Patrick J. Duffy (ed.), *Monaghan History and Society, interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county*, Geography Publications, 2017, p723. See also, 'Intensive raiding, two more banks suffer', 'Threatening letters, a sensational exposure', 'A mean forgery', *Irish Independent*, 6, 8, 11 May 1922. Two of these stories concerned a well-connected, captured and deported, youth masquerading as the IRA, while extorting money from wealthy Waterford Roman Catholics, 'Threatening letters to Waterford residents', *Munster Express*, 6 May 1922. Point also made by Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green, The Irish Civil War*, 2004.

¹⁶ Conor Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland: Popular Militancy 1917 to 1923*, Cork UP, 2009; Francis Devine, *SIPTU, Organising History*, SIPTU, 2009; William O'Brien, *Forth the Banners Go*, Three Candles, 1969. Donal O'Driscoll, 'Losing a War it Never Fought': labour, socialism and the War of Independence', *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*.

¹⁷ The six elected Protestants were, James G. Douglas, Sir John Griffith, Edward MacLysaght, Alice Stopford Green, and Thomas Westropp. Glascoff J.R.M. Symes, *Sir John Keane and Cappoquin House in time of War and Revolution*, Four Courts, 2016, p35, n127. Keane helped organise a "White Guards" or "Farmers Freedom Force", that used violence against striking farm workers in Waterford in 1923, Mark Phelan, *Irish Responses to Fascist Italy, 1919-1932*, PhD thesis, NUIG, 2012, p245 (see also note 10). Having missed these six elected, Elaine Byrne's 36 Roman Catholic senators total should be 30, 'A Unique Experiment in Idealism: the Irish Senate 1922-28', in Ciara Meehan, Mel Farrell, Jason Knrick, eds, *A Formative Decade: Ireland in the 1920s*, IAP, 2015, p64. Patrick Buckland's *Irish Unionism I, the Anglo Irish and the New Ireland 1855-1922*, Gill & MacMillan, 1972, p289, n 46, made the same mistake.

cunning the power they had once received by right'. In his 1965 analysis of W.B. Yeats' politics, Conor Cruise O'Brien referred similarly to Protestant senators making 'political choices not as Protestants but as bourgeois'. Senator John Bagwell remarked that, though southern landlords 'ceased' to be unionists, they 'have not ceased ... to enrich their country' and also, presumably, themselves 'with inherited gifts of loyalty and leadership'.¹⁸

The new state incorporated pre-existing socio-economic formations into a conservative hegemonic bloc. These included remnants of the mainly Protestant landed gentry, the significantly Protestant large-farm sector and the dominant Protestant bourgeoisie. It contained also a Protestant upper middle and skilled working-class component, plus domestic servants sometimes recruited from Protestant orphanages. The largely self-contained community either operated or experienced preferential hiring mechanisms, lasting until the 1970s. Within the majority confessional population, the regime's support base included wealthier farmers and merchants, newly established and aspirant capitalists and an arriviste upper middle class. The Roman Catholic Church provided ideological and organisational ballast to this latter group and to the state itself.¹⁹

Indications of the incipient alliance were evident during the Civil War, in the 12 January 1923 *Church of Ireland Gazette*. The Roman Catholic Church was rebuked for complicity in previous disorder, but then instructed on how to assist in defeating the 'looting and bolshevism' said to constitute the anti-Treaty campaign. The church of the majority was advised to transform its 'million men in sodalities' into 'fascisti'. Previously, on 3 and 10 November, the paper had remarked positively on Benito Mussolini's 'young men with their romantic black shirts', whose recent putsch gave Italy 'a really virile government'. The new state engaged in such brutality, including torture and unofficial as well as official executions, as it thought necessary to preserve its existence. Each element of its support base was permitted to pursue aims incorporated within the economic and ideological interests of the reconfigured, not entirely new, ruling elite.²⁰ Any inhibitions on social radicalism that may have stemmed

from the outcome of the War of Independence protected rather than threatened relative Protestant privilege.

Sectarian controls within the Irish state were aimed at inhibiting radical republican and socialist influences within the large, over 90%, Roman Catholic majority. They were enabled by government support for Catholic Church efforts in education, health, youth detention and social service provision. Church entry was stimulated under British rule in 19th Century Ireland by, in addition to poverty and destitution, a battle for sectarian supremacy with Protestant proselytisers running pre-existing services.²¹

During the 1990s, historiography on these questions was heavily influenced by Northern Ireland's more recent, post 1968, Troubles. The 'native versus settler' conflict-narrative there was transposed on to and helped to considerably confuse the southern past. Sectarian attitudes displayed openly by northern unionists were allegedly imprinted in reverse on 1920s opponents of British rule. Irish republican resistance officially shunned sectarianism in favour of, as the Protestant founder of Irish republicanism, Wolfe Tone, put it, 'the common name of Irishman'. Historians countered by portraying secular republicanism as gestural, belied by evidence of localised sectarian hostility.²² Before 1922, it was alleged, victimised and innocent Protestants got it in the neck.

These allegations gave rise to a still-rumbling debate. Historians alleging anti-Protestantism were followed by others, building on and confirming initial findings. Peter Hart's, the most controversial analysis, was robustly critiqued, initially from outside the academy. It was sufficient to stimulate within the historical profession some, occasionally resentful, internal reappraisal. Hart was shown to have excised evidence of loyalist informing in Cork, so as to depict the IRA as targeting uninvolved Protestants. Brian Murphy pointed that out in 1998, followed by Meda Ryan in 2003, who questioned Hart's depiction of IRA leader Tom Barry as a liar and serial killer. John Borgonovo in 2006 presented evidence of IRA detection of civilian loyalist activism in Cork. He demonstrated the extent and sophistication, generally, of republican intelligence gathering and implicitly criticised Hart's 'irresponsible' presentation of evidence on the subject. John Regan broadened the discussion in 2013 to situate Hart's research within a faulty revisionist paradigm.²³

¹⁸ David Fitzpatrick, 'Yeats and the Senate', *Studia Hibernica*, No. 12, 1972, pp9, 12-13. Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Passion and Cunning, an essay on the Politics of W.B. Yeats', in A. Norman Jeffares, K.G.W. Cross (eds), *In Excited reverie: A Centenary Tribute, W.B. Yeats 1865-1939*, Macmillan, 1965, p250 (see also, pp241-2, 250-1). It is noticeable that in Fitzpatrick's *Descendancy, Irish Protestant histories since 1795* (CUP, 2014), consisting mainly of previously published work, 'Yeats and the Senate' is absent, as is any reference to the article or even to the word 'Senate', though Fitzpatrick devoted Chapter 4 to Yeats and fellow poet Louis MacNeice. Symes, *Keane*, p35.

¹⁹ James F. Meenan, 'Economic Life', in Michael Hurley SJ, ed., *Irish Anglicanism, 1869-1969*, Allan Figgis, 1970, pp141-2; Bowen, *Protestants*. See also, Meehan, *Embers*, pp8-11; Frank Barry, 'Old Dublin Merchant "Free of Ten and Four": The Life and Death of Protestant Businesses in Independent Ireland', in Ian d'Alton, Ida Milne (eds), *Protestant and Irish. Bowen, Protestants in a Catholic State*; Meehan, 'Shorthand for Protestants'.

²⁰ See John M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution, 1921-1936*, G&M, 1999.

²¹ See Tony Fahey, 'The Catholic Church and Social Policy', in Sean Healy, Brigid Reynolds, eds, *Values, Catholic Social Thought and Public Policy*, CORI, 2007, pp147-50. Irene Whelan, *The Bible War in Ireland: the 'Second Reformation' and the Polarization of Protestant-Catholic Relations, 1800-1840*, Lilliput, 2005. Jennifer Ridden, 'The Forgotten History of the Protestant Crusade: Religious Liberalism in Ireland', *Journal of Religious History*, v31, n1, February 2007. Miriam Moffitt, 'The Society for Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics: Philanthropy or Bribery?', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, v30, n1, January 2006. Miriam Moffitt, *Soupers and Jumpers: the Protestant Missions in Connemara, 1848-1937*, Nonsuch, 2008.

²² In Eoin O'Duffy, *a self-made hero*, OUP, 2005, p56, Fearghal McGarry presented this view.

²³ Brian Murphy 1998 reference in, 'Peter Hart, the issue of sources', in *Troubled History*, p48; Media Ryan. *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, Mercier, 2003; Hart, *IRA*, pp1, 6, 23, 36, 100; Borgonovo, *Spies*, pp96-7; Regan, *Myth*.

Hart's claim that IRA activity occasioned Cork Protestant depopulation, on a Balkan scale, was eviscerated in 2013 by none other than David Fitzpatrick. He concluded, while still maintaining that republicans were hostile to Protestants, that the 'inexorable' decline in Southern Protestant numbers 'was mainly self-inflicted'. More recently, attempts have been made to resuscitate Hart's approach. The first 'Foster Professor of Irish History' in Oxford, Ian McBride, targeted Regan's research in a ponderous 2017 critique. It turned up unscholarly heat on what were termed 'anti-Hart campaigners'.²⁴

That, however, is not my theme here. Instead I wish to concentrate on an overlooked example of self-reinforcing inaccurate research in the TCD Workshop tradition, that emerged independently of Hart's Cork-based analysis. Two revisionist motifs are present in this case to an extreme degree: proof by constant re-assertion and generalising from exceptions. As a case history, it illustrates the use and abuse of fragmentary and partially reported evidence to sustain overarching conclusions. It also displays what happens when such research, in an intimate professional setting, is left to its own devices, largely untouched by outside scrutiny. It shows that critical self-reflection is not characteristic of the revisionist approach, despite advertisements to the contrary.

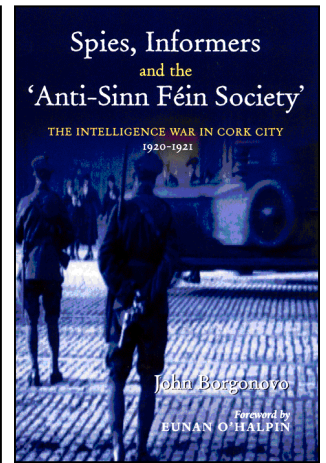
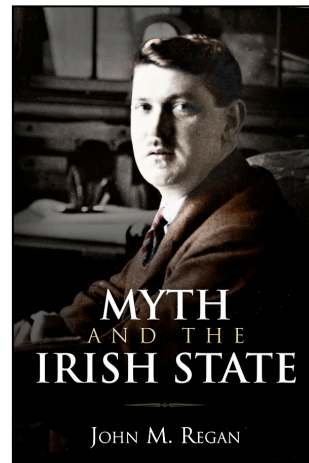
3 Monaghan Protestants and Kate Carroll

I consider historians' treatment of an aspect of the War of Independence conflict in Monaghan in 1921.

Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan were three Ulster counties in the southern Irish Free State. During the 1912-14 Home Rule crisis, Ulster Unionist leader Edward Carson commended armed Monaghan loyalists occupying the 'outposts of Ulster'. In the November 1918 Westminster General Election Sinn Féin won 73 of 105 Irish seats. Their two candidates won both in Monaghan—one, Ernest Blythe, was Protestant. By 1920 the county's 25 per cent Protestant and mainly unionist minority, concentrated in north Monaghan, was insufficient to sustain a successful sectarian overlordship. Forthcoming Protestant-Unionist dominance in Northern Ireland would have been destabilised by adding Monaghan's Roman Catholic majority. The Ulster Unionist Council ruthlessly left behind their Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan brethren. But before and after what Monaghan's *Northern Standard* called a 'deliberate betrayal', Monaghan loyalists fought the IRA and persecuted local Roman Catholics.²⁵ Revisionist historians instead portrayed a sectarian IRA that victimised

²⁴ David Fitzpatrick, 'Protestant depopulation and the Irish Revolution', *Irish Historical Studies*, v38, n152, November 2013, p643. Ian McBride, 'The Peter Hart Affair in Perspective: History, Ideology, and the Irish Revolution', *Historical Journal*, v61, n1, 2017. The essay singled out Regan as one of two alleged 'anti-Hart campaigners' (Meehan is presumed to be the second), as opposed to Hart's 'brilliant, prize-winning', 'instant classic'. Regan's critique in *Myth and the Irish State*. See also Niall Meehan, Brian Murphy, *The Embers of Revisionism*, Aubane, 2017; Niall Meehan, 'Examining Peter Hart', *Field Day Review* 10, 2014.

²⁵ Tim Wilson, 'The Strange Death of loyalist Monaghan', in Senia Paseta (ed.), *Uncertain Futures*, OUP, 2017, pp177, 179-83. Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, p41 ('callous betrayal'). *Standard* comment (13 March 1920) in Micheau, *Revolution?*, p111.



Protestants. This narrative paralleled, but has attracted less curiosity than, Hart's research.

In examining it here I look at particular claims that accompanied commentary on the April 1921 death of Kate Carroll, one of three women executed by the IRA, out of 196 executions, or thereabouts, during the war of independence.²⁶ Historical judgement establishes a coherent narrative, a story of the past, whose plausibility is, or should be, sustained at each point by reference to evidence: valid history can only be what the evidence obliges us to believe. Without relevant, adequately interpreted, and publicly available source material, purported history tends toward fiction. Explanations of Kate Carroll's fate, in research by Marie Coleman, Anne Dolan, Terence Dooley, Diarmaid Ferriter, Brian Hanley, Fearghal McGarry, Eunan O'Halpin and Tim Wilson, published between 1986 and 2018, will be considered in that context. I will look at the presentation of evidence available when historians were composing their analysis.²⁷ I will also briefly survey contrasting treatment of 1920-22 anti-Catholic pogroms in Belfast.

3.1 Terence Dooley's analysis

Terence Dooley's 342-page 1986 MA thesis on Monaghan loyalists inaugurated a sectarianism narrative built upon by other historians. He accused the IRA of being involved in 'callous [...] sectarian crimes'. In April 1921 the IRA 'rank-and file', 'obsessed with ancestral grievances', 'murdered' a 'middle-aged Protestant spinster' named Kate Carroll. 'She had', he observed, 'been suspected of giving information to the R.I.C.', i.e. the Royal Irish Constabulary.²⁸ Dooley, later a prominent historian in NUI Maynooth, repeated the observations in a 1988 monograph and in a 1990 chapter in an edited collection, *Religion, Conflict and Co-existence in Ireland*. With little variation, the claims reappeared in a 2000 study of Monaghan Protestants. After making the 'ancestral grievances' point, all four works asserted,

As Kate Carroll was a Protestant who was murdered against directions of a general [IRA headquarters] order [specifying that female spies be warned, not killed] this would suggest

²⁶ Pádraig Ó Ruairc, *Spies*, p433; updating, Ó Ruairc's *Truce: Murder, Myth and the last Days of the Irish war of Independence*, Mercier, 2017, pp99-105.

²⁷ Of this group, Brian Hanley is not usually associated with the revisionist approach. In the discussion on Carroll, he was singular in reflecting afterwards on his approach, as we shall discover.

²⁸ Terence Dooley, *Protestant Politics and Society in Co. Monaghan, 1911-26: the Revolutionary Experience of a Minority in Decline*, MA thesis, Maynooth, 1986, pp171-3.

that local IRA units did more or less what they liked, and that in a county such as Monaghan, where Protestants had traditionally held the upper hand, IRA policy was dictated to a certain extent not by a national cause, but by a desire to exact revenge at a local level.²⁹

Dooley wrote, without supplying evidence, that Carroll's execution was carried out in defiance of Monaghan's IRA leadership. His source for Carroll's religious persuasion was, and remained, the '21 April 1921' *Northern Standard* (published in fact on the 22nd).³⁰ More generally, Dooley viewed loyalists targeted by the IRA as sectarian victims.

Dooley reported himself 'the first researcher' to access the Marron Collection, IRA reminiscences adapted for use in a booklet marking the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising in Monaghan. Surprisingly, although some testimonies contain references to Kate Carroll's death, Dooley did not cite or even mention them.³¹ Instead, he relied on the *Northern Standard* newspaper account and on his own speculations.

Dooley, not the first historian to discuss Carroll's execution,³² was first in asserting a sectarian motive for her demise. While predating the Trinity History Workshop research program, Dooley's analysis fits neatly within. Yet, a tension is apparent: claiming that Carroll's execution was sectarian even though the IRA suspected her of informing. The tension can disappear if historians demonstrate that it was Carroll's religion which fuelled or over-determined IRA suspicion. Subsequent studies reinforced that view by introducing additional, non-political, reasons for the IRA's apparent vendetta against Kate Carroll.

3.2 Fearghal McGarry's analysis

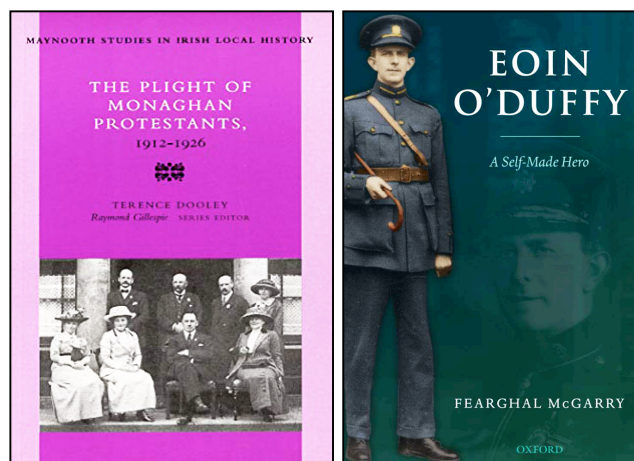
Carroll's fate attracted more attention in 2005, in Fearghal McGarry's well-received biography of Monaghan IRA leader Eoin O'Duffy—the 1930s leader of the Blueshirts. The Queen's University, Belfast, historian promoted a new narrative involving poitin (an illegally distilled whiskey) as well as Protestantism. For McGarry, citing the 23 April *Dundalk Democrat*, 'Kitty' Carroll was 'a middle aged Protestant spinster' who distilled poitin and therefore 'a person of no social consequence'. He surmised, 'The charge

²⁹ *Ibid*; *The Decline of Unionist Politics in County Monaghan*, Maynooth, 1988, pp19-20 (also includes 'inherited' as well as 'ancestral' grievances); 'Monaghan Protestants in a time of crisis', in RV Comerford, et. al. (eds), *Religion, Conflict and Co-existence in Ireland, Essays Presented to Monsignor Patrick J. Corish*, Gill & Macmillan, 1990, pp240-1; *The Plight of the Monaghan Protestants, 1912-26*, IAP, 2000, p44 (same as 1988).

³⁰ A point considered later.

³¹ Dooley, *Protestant Politics*, pXIV, 336. *Cuimhneachán Mhuineacháin, Souvenir Programme, 1916-1966*, Monaghan, 1966. The collection, now in Monaghan County Museum, was named after Fr. Leo Marron. Its references to Kate Carroll are considered later.

³² A 1923 pro-British account based on access to British intelligence material, that combined reaction, racism and anti-Semitism, by TCD Lecky Professor W Alison Phillips, *The Revolution in Ireland 1916-23*, was first, 2nd ed., 1926, p199. See also Osmonde Winter, coordinator of Dublin Castle's intelligence efforts in 1920-21, *Winter's Tale*, Richards Press, 1955, p302; Richard Bennett, *The Black and Tans*, Pen & Sword, 2010 [1959], pp190-91; and, subsequently, Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government in Ireland, Dáil Éireann, 1919-22*, Gill & Macmillan, 1995, p251.



of spying appears to have been a convenient rationale for the execution of an obvious and antisocial security risk'. W Alison Phillips, TCD's first Lecky Professor of Irish History, also pushed poitin as the basis of IRA action. His pro-British *Revolution in Ireland*, based on access to Dublin Castle files, was published in 1923. TCD Workshop historians have, in a sense, retraced his footsteps.³³

McGarry reproduced a passage from the Monaghan RIC County Inspector's report for April 1920, which contained the Dublin Castle narrative that had appeared in the *Dundalk Democrat*:

Seeing others also making poteen [Kate Carroll] sent out a letter to the police telling about them. This letter was captured on the raid on the mails and Kitty was taken out of her house 16/17 April, marched a mile away and shot dead. The usual IRA notice was forthcoming but this also is believed to be a case of sheltering behind their terrorism.³⁴

McGarry construed the County Inspector as asserting that, in the unseen letter, Carroll had 'inform[ed] on her competition'. A preceding paragraph, which McGarry did not cite, suggested that Carroll was no longer distilling. She was, the inspector wrote, servicing a loan used to pay a fine imposed 'some years ago'. This assertion tied in with Dublin Castle's portrayal of a now concerned citizen, naming those currently in the poitin business: no longer, as McGarry asserted, 'her competition'. McGarry cited part of the RIC report appearing to suit his thesis, while omitting a section querying it.

As well as the 23 April *Dundalk Democrat* report on Carroll's execution, McGarry cited a 7 May report of proceedings of a British Military Court of Inquiry, in lieu of a formal inquest, into her death. At the court Carroll's brother, Patrick, reportedly stated that her IRA abductor asked Kate, 'Are you making any drink now?' She allegedly responded that 'she was not and that she would not pay any more fines'. Patrick Carroll also reported,

She had been raided many times by the IRA for making whiskey. She had also been fined by the government for making illicit whiskey.

McGarry's definitive assertion that Carroll was 'fined by both the IRA and the RIC... refused to pay the fines' and

³³ McGarry, *Duffy*, pp65-6.

³⁴ Report, RIC Monaghan County Inspector, April 1921, 'The British in Ireland' (CO 904), Police Reports, 1914-1921, Part 4, Box 115, H0461.000, Reel 075, National Archives, Dublin. In the *Dundalk Democrat* and *Northern Standard*, Carroll was named 'Kitty', whereas in other newspapers, excepting the *Freeman's Journal*, 21 April 1921, it was 'Kate'. Phillips, *Revolution*, p199. Poinín also spelled 'poteen'.

‘continued to distil poitin’ is not supported by the reported interchange. ‘Government’ imposed fines were mentioned (as also by the County Inspector), which Kate Carroll said she would pay no more. The *Dundalk Democrat* had mentioned ‘various rumours in circulation’, one that Carroll ‘communicated information to Crown Forces,’ while ‘others allege that there was a fine issued by the Republicans in connection with illicit distillation’. McGarry appears (in that his sourcing is not explicit on the point) to have cited a rumour as fact, in preference to specific information from Carroll’s brother and the RUC inspector.³⁵

Since the IRA had intercepted Carroll’s fateful letter, it also is unclear how the RIC Inspector would know that Carroll was informing on poitin-makers, not on IRA members or operations? Using McGarry’s interpretation, based on limited citation of the RIC report, why would Carroll assume that the RIC was interested in poitin-making competitors, to the extent of ignoring her own illegal enterprise? Surely these elementary questions should have been used to interrogate the textual evidence?

McGarry also observed that, ‘in contrast to’ other executions, ‘the IRA’s account was confirmed by the county inspector’. What IRA account? Certainly, none cited. Patrick Carroll reported an IRA volunteer asking his sister if she was ‘making drink’. Is that ‘the IRA’s account’? If so, a thin thread was employed to base a conclusion, in agreement with the RIC, that Kate Carroll was killed merely for informing on poitin distillers.³⁶

Carroll’s assumed occupation (poitin distillation), her religion and unmarried status, were construed as determinant factors in her death. McGarry refused to countenance even the remote possibility that Carroll might have assisted Crown forces against the IRA. He presented an incident of (as in the RIC report) ‘sheltering behind ... terrorism’ in a manner that, as we shall see, simply ignored contrary IRA testimony.³⁷

Citing Dooley’s argument as ‘sound’, McGarry concurred that Carroll’s execution was based ‘on a desire to extract [sectarian] revenge on a local level’. McGarry quibbled over whether Brigade Commander Eoin O’Duffy was involved in the decision. Again following Dooley, McGarry characterised as ‘inevitably... sectarian’ the IRA’s clashes with Monaghan’s loyalist forces—described elsewhere as ‘pro-state militias ... a fifth column’ in which the UVF, and the Ulster Special Constabulary recruited from the UVF, were augmented by ‘town-guards’.³⁸ In McGarry’s circular logic, any IRA opposition to such avowedly ‘Protestant’ quasi- or paramilitary forces (‘Protestants with guns’, as Tim Wilson described them) was ‘sectarian’, impliedly because IRA members were

primarily Roman Catholic. McGarry even cited Peter Hart’s Cork study in support, in a muddled and contradictory sentence:

While it is clear that few, if any, people were shot because of their religion, the high proportion of Protestants among the IRA’s civilian victims, suggests that capital punishment was far more likely to be meted out to Protestants who provoked hostility or suspicion than to Catholic transgressors.³⁹

Monaghan data, in a county containing one in four Protestants, indicating that the IRA executed eight people as spies, of whom seven were Roman Catholic, does not support this theory.⁴⁰

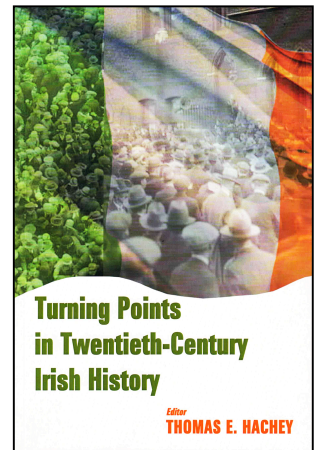
3.3 Anne Dolan’s analysis

It is time to move to a third recent representation of Carroll’s fate that quite spectacularly refashioned her status as a marginalised sectarian victim. TCD historian Anne Dolan’s 2011 essay, ‘Ending War in a “Sportsmanlike Manner”, the Milestone of Revolution, 1919-23’, began with, ‘There were five bullets in Kitty Carroll’s body when it was found in April 1921’. She reported,

The British Military Court of Inquiry investigating her death declared that “[Carroll] was probably suspected of disclosing information to the Police with regard to local Sinn Féin activities”... [A]s the Court politely put it [Carroll was] “a woman of feeble intellect”.⁴¹

The allegedly ‘feeble’ minded Carroll was now, literally, an unwitting victim. Dolan also focussed on distilling hard liquor. She suggested that Carroll may have informed on ‘those IRA men who seemed intent on hounding her out of business’. Similarly, and again without evidence being supplied, she contended that Carroll ‘was fined by a republican court’ for making poitin.

Dolan sourced Court of Inquiry findings in papers of Francis Hemming, private secretary to the last British Chief Secretary for Ireland, the Canadian Sir Hamar Greenwood. Carroll featured in Hemming’s notes on ‘women attacked by Sinn Féin’.⁴² Dolan seriously misread them.



³⁵ British in Ireland (CO 904). The 23 April *Democrat* also included un-sourced evidence from the Court of Inquiry. The 7 May *Democrat* Court of Inquiry report did not date its 19 April sitting (see note 43).

³⁶ In addition, McGarry observed without a source (p66) that O’Duffy had ordered that poitin-makers be exiled or shot. On page 52 O’Duffy is cited as asserting that the stricture applied to drunken IRA volunteers.

³⁷ McGarry, *Duffy*, pp65-6.

³⁸ Tim Wilson, ‘The Strange Death of loyalist Monaghan’, in Senia Paseta (ed.), *Uncertain Futures*, OUP, 2017, p183.

³⁹ McGarry, *Duffy*, p66, 69 (citing Hart, *Enemies*, pp303-4). Micheau’s 1990 reference to ‘sectarian violence’ in *Revolution?*, p115, was in this context. Curiously, he made no reference to Kate Carroll’s execution or to Dooley’s contention that it was sectarian, though he cited Dooley’s 1990 article featuring Carroll.

⁴⁰ Providing no source, Dooley declared in 2017 that the figure was five and two with one, an outsider, of unknown persuasion. Pádraig Ó Ruairc’s county-by-county research into all spy deaths, in 2017, listed all eight in Monaghan by name and suggested the figure was seven Roman Catholics and one Protestant. Testimony in the Marron collection, 5F1, confirmed that Hugh Duffy was Protestant, ‘Information supplied by Johnny McGahy, Owen McGahy, Paddy Treanor, Joe Duffy, Mick McCabe, & Tommy Sherry [Fourth Battalion]. Written by Rev. L. Marron, January 1966’. Terence Dooley, *The Irish Revolution 1912-1923*, Monaghan, Four Courts, 2017, p92. Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, pp103-4.

⁴¹ In Thomas Hachey (ed.), *Turning Points in 20th Century Irish History*, IAP, 2011, p21.

⁴² Dolan, *Milestone*, p25. Dolan cited, ‘Particulars of women attacked

The sentences Dolan reproduced as those of the Court of Inquiry were in fact Hemming's and his alone. He made one brief reference to a Court assertion that the IRA shot Carroll in the head. Actual Court findings ventured no motive for the execution and expressed no view on Carroll's mental status.⁴³ Hemming's remarks and Dolan's subsequent misreading may have stemmed from Dublin Castle's widely disseminated press reports on the killing, though here I speculate. As observed, these appeared in the 23 April *Dundalk Democrat* and other newspapers. One stated what Hemming and the RIC County Inspector repeated, that the IRA had captured 'anonymous letters' from Carroll to the RIC about 'illicit drink traffic'. 80-year-old Susan Carroll and her son Patrick (not Kate) were reported as intellectually impaired. Had she read the report, Dolan might have spotted the anomalies. Instead, she cited an 86-word summary in a 'not verbatim' Marron Collection 'extract', concluding 'NOTE - MANY DETAILS MISSING'.⁴⁴ Indeed.

Essentially, Hemming reiterated the official line from Dublin Castle, one that McGarry and Dolan reinforced. According to Dolan, without hard evidence republicans suspected a woman who informed on poitin distillers of also informing on them. Hemming added a twist, confusing whose 'intellect' was 'feeble', which Dolan embellished.

Having misread Hemming who appears to have misread the Castle's report, Dolan took the story in a new direction:

[T]he Court of Inquiry never found out that Kitty Carroll had been pestering one of the local IRA volunteers; that she had some notion that one of them might marry her.

Dolan mused,

Perhaps some fumbled promise on a dark evening had not been kept in the cold light of day when the once amorous volunteer no longer liked what he saw.⁴⁵

Perhaps?

Are we now to assume that some cad shot Kate Carroll, or played a part in the foul deed, and did so for male chauvinist and intensely personal reasons, burying the personal in the political until Dr Dolan unearthed the truth? Her source for this remarkable twist was 'Curator Monaghan County Museum'. Unfortunately, the person who occupied and occupies that position has no view on the subject and cannot remember speaking on it to Dolan.⁴⁶ Even had he done so he would constitute a problematic source: the curator was not alive in 1921. The basis of Dolan's claim reflects creative licence. Her discipline is history, not romantic fiction.

Dolan concluded that,

In Kitty Carroll's case you can argue that she was killed

by Sinn Féin', Francis Hemming, MS CCC536 QD.2.42, Irish Papers, Bodleian Library'. See on Arthur Francis Hemming's role, 'Private Secretary to Sir Hamar Greenwood, Chief Secretary for Ireland', <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1387646> (accessed 1 December 2018).

⁴³ Courts of Inquiry in lieu of Inquest – Civilians, Kate Carroll. Aughanameena, Co Monaghan, WO 35/147B/5, TNA.

⁴⁴ Typed 'extract from Dundalk Democrat 1918-1919. Taken by Rev P. Livingstone.', Marron Collection, Monaghan County Museum, 9B1-7.

⁴⁵ Dolan, *Milestone*, p24.

⁴⁶ Personal communication, Liam Bradley, Curator, Monaghan County Museum, 23 July 2018.

The 'inappropriate' IRA man who 'stay[ed] for dinner'

Anne Dolan's reservations about IRA activity were applied in similar disproving vein to another executed spy. Her remarks in this case were prefaced with,

While it may seem like an inadequate, rather prim, choice of words, propriety does have rather a lot to do with this.

Followed by, 'something terribly inappropriate' occurred when those who afterwards shot a Protestant civilian named Thomas Bradfield, 'accepted his invitation to stay for dinner'. Dolan's observations were skewed not just by prudishness, but also by reliance again on Francis Hemming's previously cited papers, on this occasion his 'Notes on the murder of Protestants in Ireland since January 1921'.

In January and February 1921 the IRA shot two Cork cousins named Bradfield who unwittingly revealed espionage activities that endangered IRA volunteers, dates and locations ignored by Dolan. The first victim gave extensive information on IRA activity and personnel to a military column encountered on his property. He mistakenly and fatally assumed that this IRA force was British. Shortly afterwards, Bradfield's cousin and namesake was purposefully deceived similarly by Tom Barry, who commanded the IRA's Third West Cork Brigade. The Bradfields' controller, a Church of Ireland clergyman who left the area, was also identified.

Leon O'Broin's 1985 research on Dr Dorothy Stopford, a Protestant republican, recounted one of the episodes, as did Tom Barry's *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, published in 1949. In addition, three Bureau of Military History (BMH) IRA testimonies, available since 2003, identified how T.J. and Thomas Bradfield were shot as spies in West Cork in January and February 1921. This use of deception in warfare became for Anne Dolan, citing a British apologist, the basis for a somewhat snobbish critique of plebeian Irish republicans.

Sources: on both Bradfields, BMH Witness Statements (WS), 470, 540, 1648, by, respectively, Denis Lordan, Ann Hurley-O'Mahony, James 'Spud' Murphy. Dolan, *Milestones*, p29. Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, Anvil, 1981 [1949], pp110, 111. Leon O Broin, *Protestant Nationalists in Revolutionary Ireland: the Stopford Connection*, Gill & Macmillan, 1985, p177). Witness Statements available at, <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie>: 'The Bureau of Military History Collection, 1913-1921 (BMH) is a collection of 1,773 witness statements; 334 sets of contemporary documents; 42 sets of photographs and 13 voice recordings that were collected by the [Irish] State between 1947 and 1957, in order to gather primary source material for the revolutionary period in Ireland from 1913 to 1921'.

because she was a Protestant; you can argue that she was killed because she was a nuisance to a man...⁴⁷

You can argue whatever you like, of course, but evidence and logic usually help persuade. Dolan professed herself somewhat indifferent to the issue of causation. She attempted also to stand apart from the debate on historical revisionism, between the 'old, conventional, nationalist, republican, call it what you like, way', and 'the other way that likes to think it is a little more sophisticated'.⁴⁸ For Dolan, 'it was all a little more complicated' than either 'way' admitted. Her third 'way' embraced descriptions of death and dying as close as possible to the grisly and the

⁴⁷ Dolan, *Milestone*, p25.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p22.

grim, wishing 'to shift the emphasis from *who* was killed to *how* they were killed.' She is not quite as detached as she suggests because she claimed, 'fester[ing] under the quite sanitised surface of Irish nationalism' were what 'may have been little more than a sequence of dirty deeds'. In this portrayal of a nasty, hidden, underworld an IRA volunteer led a woman up the garden path, spurned her, and then shot her, also because she was Protestant. In this sinister space, it is all ifs, buts and maybes, but tied to an overarching sectarian certainty, composed in the present tense:

She might be a spy, she might not; there might be some personal grievance, there might not. And then, of course, she is a Protestant as well.⁴⁹

3.4 Dolan's 'Etiquette' of war

If the IRA is to be criticised for not engaging in 'fair play', what pray of those British and loyalist men who committed 'dirty deeds'? Consideration of British tactics and strategy might have been advisable.

That is partly because a leaflet addressed 'To members of the IRA' inspired Dolan's article title and content. It stated that Irish rebels failed to adhere to 'the laws and customs of war' that 'were drawn up by all of the great nations including America [sic], in order that war between white men should be carried out in a sportsmanlike manner and not like fights between savage tribes.' The author was British Army Director of Irish Propaganda, Brigadier-General Charles Foulkes. Conceding that his phraseology 'might seem terribly inappropriate', Dolan nevertheless agreed that the IRA's 'type of killing in Ireland marked a very significant change'. She concluded, 'The Irish had offended against [British forces'] etiquette of war'.⁵⁰

Foulkes had an interesting military pedigree. As Director of Gas Services during World War One, he commanded a brigade whose object was to poison Germans. Despite it being subsequently outlawed, the President of Britain's Chemical Warfare Committee promoted poison gas as a 'fair' and 'openly accepted' weapon. Before his deployment to Ireland Foulkes had been in India. There, alongside Winston Churchill, he 'vainly urged use of gas against Afghan rebels'. Foulkes maintained, 'Our commanders consider the [rebel] tribesmen as vermin only fit for extermination, and the troops regard them as bloodthirsty treacherous savages'.⁵¹

Dolan's view of ethical conduct during wartime relied on a poison gas enthusiast with a racist, imperialist, and genocidal outlook. The first two of these prejudices were reflected in his message to the IRA, whose activities were

The good old RIC?

In 2020, Irish government plans to commemorate the RIC came unstuck. That was partly because the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were part of the force. However, as noted, prior to their deployment similar methods were already in use. In January 1920 over 1,000 raids on premises took place, including 220 arrests. In February the respective figures were over 4,000 and 296. The first 'large scale reprisal' occurred on 20 January 1920, in Thurles, Co Tipperary. The RIC 'ran amok', firing into houses and smashing windows. Inhabitants cowered where best they could. On 19 March in Cork, a disguised RIC force broke into the home of Sinn Féin Lord Mayor Tomás MacCurtain. They shot him dead in front of his family. In Dublin two days later a young man and a girl were killed by British soldiers. On 29 and 30 March the RIC shot dead two men in their homes in Tipperary, one in his bed in Thurles. Police had previously attacked the town on 20 January and 1 March. They fired into houses, including those of newly elected Sinn Féin councillors, and exploded hand-grenades in the offices of a local newspaper. Attacks on homes in Cork followed on 7 and 12 March. After hunger striking republican prisoners were released on 15 April, supported by a general strike, police and military fired into a celebrating crowd in Miltown Malbay, County Clare, killing three and wounding nine. Sources, as in notes 54-56.

considered beyond the pale of civilised 'white men'. Dolan's reading was naïve, despite its nominal attention to the grim and grisly. Sporting metaphors hardly encompass all modes of British participation in mass slaughter during World War One. The widespread practice of killing unarmed prisoners prolonged the conflict, according to conservative historian Niall Ferguson. It continued during the subsequent Irish revolution: Pádraig Ó Ruairc estimated that at least 42 prisoners were killed 'in the custody of British forces, allegedly while attempting to escape.' David Leeson's history of the 'Black and Tans' noted that 'shot while trying to escape' was a euphemism for 'executed'.⁵²

The Black and Tans comprised nine thousand mostly English former World War One servicemen recruited to replace or augment a demoralised RIC suffering mass resignations in 1920.⁵³ Over two thousand former British officers joined an additional, largely autonomous, counterinsurgency militia, the Auxiliary Division, nominally attached to the RIC. The Black and Tans began deploying on 25 March 1920, the Auxiliary Division some months later. After their arrival, looting, theft, smashing up towns and villages, indiscriminate killing of republican suspects and civilians, and routine ill treatment and torture of prisoners, became commonplace.⁵⁴ Such behaviour had

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p29.

⁵⁰ Dolan, *Milestones*, pp23, 24-5.

⁵¹ Foulkes in Donald Richter, *Chemical Soldiers: British Gas Warfare in World War One*, Kansas UP, 1992, pp228-30. 'Foulkes, Major-General Charles Howard (1875-1965): Gas Adviser to the British Armies in France, 1915-17; Director of Gas Services for the British Armies in France, 1917-18; appointed President of the Chemical Warfare Committee, 1918; toured India in order to lecture, investigate and discuss with the Indian Government the possibility of using gas against the tribesmen on the North West Frontier, 1919-20; appointed Director of Irish Propaganda, 1921', *Issues of disarmament in British defence and foreign policy 1918-1925*, Gerard Anthony Silverlock, PhD thesis, Kings College Lon., 2000, p366.

⁵² See Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, p234, on killing prisoners. For Ferguson's discussion of the point: *The War of the World: History's Age of Hatred*, Penguin, 2007, pp127-30; also, more detail, *The Pity of War 1914-1918*, Penguin, 1999, pp367-388. David Leeson, *The Black & Tans, British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence*, OUP, 2011, p182. Noted also in *Irish Times* journalist Lionel Fleming's account of the war in West Cork, where he grew up, the son of a Church of Ireland rector, *Head or Harp*, Barrie & Rockliff, 1965, pp163-4.

⁵³ See on this and 1920 Listowel RIC mutiny, Constable Jeremiah Mee, BMH WS 379. Mee chaired the Resigned RIC Men's Organisation. See, also, Anthony Gaughan, *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee RIC*, Mercier, 2012.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Lord Longford (Frank Pakenham), *Peace by Ordeal, the Negotiation of the Anglo Irish Treaty, 1921*, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972 [1935], pp48-58.

been evident earlier, and had included reprisals, mass arrests, shootings and deportation of elected representatives, press censorship and physical attacks on the press.⁵⁵ In short, as Leeson put it, new British counterinsurgency forces ‘follow[ed] the [RIC’s] bad example’.⁵⁶

Dolan’s inability to consider well-documented Crown force violence is surprising for another reason. In 2010 she spoke at a TCD conference on ‘Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War, 1917–1923’. Her contribution, ‘The British Culture of Paramilitary Violence in the Irish War of Independence’ was published in 2013. Dolan detailed Crown forces engaged in looting, drunkenness, the burning and sacking of homes, villages and towns, torture and killing of suspects, indiscriminate shooting of civilians, ‘even rape and rapine’. British justification of ‘reprisal’ violence was noted. While not named, Foulkes’ leaflet on sportsmanlike warfare was recycled.⁵⁷

Concluding her neglect in 2011 of official violence, Dolan misattributed the responsibility solely to Irish republicans. In an unsourced final paragraph, Dolan stated:

Tom Barry referred to it as going down into the mire to find your freedom. It was no longer, as Foulkes said, ‘war ... in a sportsmanlike manner’. It is a milestone in Irish history, because this kind of killing marked a point at which there was now no turning back.⁵⁸

IRA Commander Barry in fact asserted:

The British were met with their own weapons. They had gone down in the mire to destroy us and our nation and down after them we had to go to stop them. The step was not an easy one, for one’s mind was darkened and one’s outlook made bleak by the decisions which had to be taken.⁵⁹

Barry’s words are visibly different to Dolan’s précis. Her analysis was bookended between misread sources.

3.5 Replication

Dolan’s new Kate-Carroll-as-spurned-Protestant narrative was reproduced in Diarmaid Ferriter’s popular survey *A Nation and Not a Rabble* (2015). Ferriter at first cited Brian Hanley’s large format, *The IRA: A Documentary History* (2010), whose text (as distinct from documents) contained no source notation. ‘Hanley points out that Carroll was Protestant’, wrote Ferriter, who then proceeded to quote Hanley as follows,

... there have been recurring allegations that the IRA was more likely to kill ‘spies’ if they were ex-soldiers, Protestants, or marginal figures, such as tramps, rather than ‘respectable’ members of the nationalist community.

Ferriter relied even more so on Anne Dolan, reproducing 62 words from her ‘arresting opening’, on ‘five bullets in Kitty

Brian Murphy explained how British propaganda operated

Carroll’s body’. Dolan’s misreading of Tom Barry ‘going down into the mire to find your freedom’ was presented as accurate. Ferriter also observed, via Dolan, that Carroll ‘may have had amorous intent towards an IRA man’. He asked, rhetorically, ‘Was this really about spying?’ Ferriter answered his own question by repeating Dolan’s, ‘How do you reconcile the details of the deaths of 1919–23 with the need for a myth of independence?’ One sure way is to avoid fictionalising ‘details of the deaths’.⁶⁰

4 ‘Propaganda by News’

These current academic historians’ perspectives paralleled British attempts during the conflict to prejudice public opinion against Irish revolutionary nationalism. In British wartime propaganda, official atrocities were rationalised as unfortunate reactions to Irish savagery. Such assertions, echoing Foulkes and summarised by Dorothy Macardle in 1937, viewed the Irish as ‘a race of congenital murderers... to whom the ordinary rules of civilised warfare could not be applied’.⁶¹ Hugh Pollard⁶² in Dublin Castle’s Publicity Department encapsulated the sentiment when he asked, ‘what proportion of the Irish, if not congenitally criminal, is yet racially disposed to crime?’ He continued,

Judged by English standards, the “typical Irishman” has two psychical and fundamental abnormalities, namely, moral insensibility and want of foresight. It is precisely these two



⁵⁵ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, 4th ed., Wolfhound, 1999 [1937], pp340, 341.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp328, 330–1, 333–5, 344–5. Leeson, *Black & Tans*, pp171, 191. See also boxed off section, ‘The good old RIC?’, on page 9.

⁵⁷ Anne Dolan, ‘The British Culture of Paramilitary Violence in the Irish War of Independence’, in Robert Gerwarth, John Horne (eds.), *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, OUP, 2013, pp201, 204, 206, 208, 209. Conference brochure, ‘Joint UCD/TCD conference on Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War, 1917–1923, 28–9 May 2010.

⁵⁸ Dolan, *Milestone*, p38.

⁵⁹ Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, Anvil, 1993 [1949], p116.

⁶⁰ And enveloping them in what, in another context, Bill Rolston called ‘a counterfeit sociology’, ‘What’s wrong with multiculturalism? Liberalism and the Irish Conflict’, in David Miller (ed.), *Rethinking Northern Ireland*, Routledge, 1998, p258. For an interesting link with debates on past and present in Northern Ireland, see Rolston, *ibid*, pp260–4. Also, in the same volume, Liam O’Dowd, ‘New Unionism’, *British Nationalism and the Prospects for a Negotiated Settlement in Northern Ireland*. Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation Not a Rabble*, Overlook, 2015, p209–10. Ferriter’s endnote cited pages 1–39 of Hanley’s book, whose Carroll text appeared (to be precise) on page 18.

⁶¹ Macardle, *Irish Republic*, p329. On Macardle, see Nadia Clare Smith, ‘Dorothy Macardle (1889–1958): republican and internationalist’, *History Ireland*, v15, n2, May June 2007. Macardle’s assessment was confirmed in the British Army’s *The Record of the Rebellion in Ireland, 1919–1921 and the part played by the Army in dealing with it*, which asserted, ‘Judged by English standards, the Irish are a difficult and unsatisfactory people. Their civilisation is different and in many ways lower than that of the English. They are entirely lacking in the Englishman’s respect for truth... Many were of a degenerate type and their methods of waging war were in the most case barbarous, influenced by hatred and devoid of courage’, in Brian Murphy, ‘Peter Hart: the Issue of Sources’, in Meehan, Murphy, *Troubled History*, 2008, p48.

⁶² Pollard would in 1936 help precipitate the Spanish Civil War, by flying Generalissimo Francisco Franco from the Canary Islands back to Spain where he initiated his coup against the democratically elected government, Graham Turner, John Pearson, *The Persuasion Industry*, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966, p177.

factors which are the basic characteristics of criminal psychology.⁶³

In other words, the sub-normal Irish were simply incapable of conducting themselves in like manner to Foulkes' 'white men'.⁶⁴

Basil Clarke, founder of the British public relations industry, was appointed head of the Publicity Department in 1920. His staff, including Pollard, devised a strategy of promoting 'propaganda by news'. Another of Clarke's colleagues, Major C.J.C. Street, explained that,

In order that propaganda may be [...] rendered capable of being swallowed, it must be dissolved in some fluid which the patient will readily assimilate. Regarding the press as the patient, I know of only two solvents, advertisement and news, of which the latter is by far the most convincing and most economical.⁶⁵

Brian Murphy's subsequent analysis described how 'official' British reports were distributed to receptive journalists. They bore the hallmark of, as Clarke put it, 'verisimilitude'. The Dáil Éireann newsheet, *The Irish Bulletin*, identified this methodology. It noted that in order to give 'false statements' 'verisimilitude, the English Government [...] produces Republican documents which it claims to have intercepted'. Often, they were 'simply invented'.

Crown forces were, as Macardle put it, 'protected by both censorship and propaganda'.⁶⁶ Even fake 'Irish Bulletins' appeared. One, dated 21 April 1921, reproduced the standard press, or rather British, account of Carroll's death, followed by,

The case of Kitty Carroll is an unfortunate one but no attempt is made to gloss it over. The Irish Republic is responsible for its armed forces and share with their shame as well as their glory.⁶⁷

Clarke and his colleagues promoted a 'spin' in which Carroll was shot for sending a letter the IRA had intercepted, that simply informed the RIC of illegal poitín distillation. Heartrending accounts with 'bloodcurdling' details were duly published by newspapers, suggesting that IRA fanatics had shot a concerned, law-abiding citizen, opposed to poitín distillation. The story's reproduction in local newspapers implied local knowledge, though precisely the same accounts appeared nationally. For instance, an ostensible 'Monaghan correspondent' reported Carroll as being abducted without knowledge of other members of her household and that the RIC found her body, neither of

which was true. Her long-dead 'infirm father' was reported as residing with her. Historians Dooley, McGarry and Dolan reproduced that falsehood as a reliable assertion.⁶⁸

As it emerged that Carroll was also a distiller, McGarry insisted that Carroll, a poor Protestant, was shot for betraying rivals to the RIC. The Redmondite, hence editorially receptive, *Dundalk Democrat*, on which McGarry relied, reproduced Dublin Castle reports at length. Dooley had cited the shorter unionist *Northern Standard* version.⁶⁹ It had the virtue of separating the alleged poitín connection from a rumour that Carroll 'gave certain information to the authorities' and, importantly, 'reliable gossip' that she 'received warning notices'.⁷⁰ Another uncited newspaper, the Cavan based *Anglo-Celt*, 23 April 1921, sensibly reported as effectively mutually exclusive, the 'different' allegations historians conjoined, that: a) Carroll was a poitín maker; or b) protested to the RIC about poitín makers.

Since the IRA allegedly had intercepted Carroll's letter—that apparently no longer exists—British claims or speculations as to its contents, if not entirely invented, could only have been based on the RIC's previous interactions with its author. So, what was the nature of Carroll's correspondence with the RIC? Is it possible that Irish republican sources of evidence might throw at least some light on that subject? If so, would our current professional historians deign to notice or reveal them?

4.1 Republican Testimony

Two IRA-veteran Bureau of Military History (BMH) witness statements, available from 2003 and therefore to McGarry and Dolan, presented an alternative scenario. So too did the previously accessible Marron Collection Monaghan IRA activists' recollections.

⁶⁸ See, *The Terror in Ireland, Murder, Outrage, Intimidation*, reprinted from the "Belfast telegraph", published by the owners, W & AG Baird, n.d., p.9, which further amplified the Castle news report, in 'Pamphlets War of Independence 1919-21', NLI, IR94109, P34. Dooley, *Plight*, p44, 'invalided elderly parents; McGarry, *Duffy*, p66, 'senile parents'; Dolan, 'Milestone', p21, 'indigent parents'. The family's 1911 census return (see note 75. graphic p13) indicated Susan Carroll as household head and two children, Patrick and Kate. Head of household in the 1901 census was a then 70-year-old Bernard Carroll. Between 1901 and 1911, there are discrepancies in the reported age of Kate (20 in 1901, 26 in 1911) and Patrick (30 in 1901, 49 in 1911).

⁶⁹ McGarry, *Duffy*, pp364-5nn144-4, 147. McGarry on 'Redmondite' *Dundalk Democrat*, *ibid.*, p72. Dooley, *Plight*, p63, nn17-18. Dooley on unionist *Northern Standard*, *Decline*, p16. For *Standard* 'strident attacks' on Sinn Féin, Micheau, *Revolution?*, p108. John Redmond (1856-1918) was Irish Parliamentary Party leader, supporting Home Rule. Sinn Féin heavily defeated the party in the November 1918 general election.

⁷⁰ See *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 April 1921; *Northern Standard*, 22 April 1921. The *Standard* devoted most coverage that week to the British Prime Minister's retort to the Bishop of Chelmsford and nineteen 'leaders of various [British] Protestant religious denominations'. They had criticised 'the deplorable policy of indiscriminate and unauthorised reprisals' by 'irregular' Crown forces. Lloyd George countered in part by pointing to Carroll's execution. Her killing was raised also in the British House of Commons, where Lady Astor asserted that the martyred Carroll 'was trying to protest against drink being sold'. Lloyd George response cited in full in C.J.C. Street, *Ireland in 1921*, Phillip Allen, 1922, pp33-43. It appeared also as a pamphlet, *Irish "Reprisals", A Reply to the Bishop of Chelmsford*, Harrison & Sons, 1922.

⁶³ H.B.C. Pollard, *The Secret Societies of Ireland, their Rise and Progress*, Phillip Allen & Co., 1922, p245. For a survey of views on the Irish failing to meet 'civilised' standards, R.M. Douglas, 'The Swastika and the Shamrock: British Fascism and the Irish Question, 1918-1940', *Albion*, v29, n1, Spring, 1997.

⁶⁴ For an analysis of the origin of such racist conceptions, L.P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, revised ed., Smithsonian, 1997.

⁶⁵ Street in Brian Murphy, *The Origins and Organisation of British Propaganda in Ireland in 1920*, Aubane/Spinwatch, 2006, p29 (on Clarke, see David Miller introduction).

⁶⁶ *Bulletin* in Murphy, *Origins*, p28. Macardle, *Irish Republic*, p346.

⁶⁷ In Jack Lane (ed.), *The forged 'Irish Bulletin'*, Aubane 2017, p23. Forging of the *Irish Bulletin* is dealt with also in Frank Gallagher, *The Four Glorious Years*, Irish Press, 1953, pp101-6

John McConnell's BMH statement noted that, 'as a result of information got in raids on mails', there was 'no doubt as to [Carroll's] guilt'. Subsequent Garda Superintendent James McKenna, then an IRA captain, stated, 'The proof against [Carroll] was very strong'. He went on to observe that, as opposed to another spy who 'was intelligent and shrewd and more difficult' to detect, Carroll 'was scarcely normal and was not sufficiently intelligent to cloak her activities'.⁷¹

What of Marron Collection testimony? Terence Dooley's various texts ignored it, but the collection included recollections by four members of the Scotstown IRA battalion, which referred to Carroll, matter-of-factly, as one of 'two local spies [who] were shot'. Others remarked that spies in the area had undermined IRA capacity to engage the enemy and had caused arrests and beating of identified volunteers. Brigade Intelligence Officer Dr Conn Ward called Carroll, significantly, a 'paid agent'. Joe Shevlin worked in Monaghan Post Office, where he 'decoded coded messages between, police and military, which he passed on to the IRA'. Shevlin reported that Carroll 'was suspected of sending correspondence to the Police at Monaghan. She was I believe confronted with one of those postal communications'. An IRA court martial reportedly then determined Carroll's execution.⁷²

McGarry cited an unnamed Shevlin on the unremarkable fact that the IRA labelled Carroll a spy after her court martial and execution, a label McGarry had suggested was a cover for sectarian vengeance. The rest of Shevlin's testimony, as well as his strategic post office occupation, was ignored. Conn Ward also, despite his important position and claim, was omitted, as was John McConnell. McGarry noted the also unnamed (cited as 'one volunteer') James McKenna's remark that Carroll was 'scarcely normal' but not his view that there was 'very strong' evidence against her. Anne Dolan was even more selective. She cited just 'one [IRA] member' (P. McGrory, Marron Collection), to the effect that Carroll was 'by any standards a half-wit', but ignored his expression of regret at her shooting, 'even if she was guilty of what she was accused [of]'. In short, Dooley, McGarry and Dolan cited no available IRA testimony to the effect that Kate Carroll had informed against the IRA.⁷³

⁷¹ BMH WS, John McConnell 574, James McKenna 1028.

⁷² Shevlin noted another woman who disclosed 'certain information about two school teachers' to 'a tan [named Constable Pepper] in the local barrack'. While this accused lost her job, 'she was acquitted at her court-martial and allowed to go free'. Was she not also, in McGarry's terms, a 'security risk'? The acquittal indicates more discrimination in IRA policy than McGarry suggested. Joe Shevlin, '1915/1922 period', 'Intelligence work', MCM Marron collection, 2J; Brigade intelligence head, Dr Conn Ward, Fr Duffy notebook, 4I. See also, from Marron, Mathew Smith, 2A; Patrick Woods, 2D; Scotstown battalion area statement by Paddy Mohan, Paddy McCluskey, Harry Lavery, Francie McKenna, December 1965, 2F; James Mulligan statement, Scotstown, 3B. On Shevlin's role, Mathew Smith, 2A; Ward in *Cuimhneachán Mhuineacháin, Souvenir Programme, 1916-1966*, Monaghan, 1966, pp74-5. I am indebted to Theresa Loftus, Monaghan County Museum, for her assistance in making the Marron collection and later cited Thomas Brennan papers available for study.

⁷³ McGarry, *Duffy*, p66 Carroll referred to, peripherally, in a note on Ward, p365n165). Dolan, 'Milestones', p21.

No IRA account mentioned poitín. Still, no pun intended, it is arguable that IRA testimony, while attributing guilt, did not detail precisely what Carroll had done to merit execution. But did any historian possess such evidence? One did and discussed it in 2006, but in such circumstances that other historians, generally, were unaware of his contribution. He discussed the evidence again seven years later, but so obscurely that it had the same non-effect.

Before detailing that, we must clarify one important matter.

5 Post-Protestant

Besides disinterest in poitín, no IRA volunteer had mentioned Carroll's religion. Equally striking, no reference to her religion appeared in contemporary British or media accounts. Subsequent pro-British commentaries, by TCD's Professor Phillips in 1923 and former Dublin Castle intelligence chief Osmonde Winter in 1955, also had nothing to say on the matter. Dooley, McGarry and Dolan, all experienced professional historians, appeared oblivious to an absence of reference to what, for Basil Clarke and his colleagues, for Francis Hemming, as well as for Lloyd George, would have been a propaganda godsend.⁷⁴

There was good reason for British reticence: Kate Carroll was *not* Protestant.

No referenced or available source, local or national, identified Carroll as Protestant. It is not in *Northern Standard* and *Dundalk Democrat* accounts cited by Dooley and McGarry. Dolan had cited Carroll's appearance in Francis Hemming's notes on 'women attacked by Sinn Féin'. She also examined his 'The Murder of Protestants', from which Carroll is conspicuously absent.

Yet, no alarm bells rang, it seems, for any of these scholars, at the lack of evidence to prove their sectarianism interpretation of Kate Carroll's fate. When her family completed the religion question in the 1911 census, Carroll was Roman Catholic, as were all other members of her household.⁷⁵ To be sure, online digitisation of the 1911 census was completed in August 2009, making research beforehand somewhat more difficult, but the census schedules had been available to scholars since 1961.⁷⁶ More to the point is that there is no apparent source-related basis for Dooley's initial, or McGarry's subsequent, assertion that Carroll was Protestant. Nevertheless, sharing the same basic assumptions, Dolan, Ferriter, and also Timothy Wilson, continued to publish the mistaken claim.

Kate Carroll's death was exceptional, as one of three women the IRA executed during the conflict. Unmarried, she lived with an elderly apparently senile mother and a

⁷⁴ See David Hogan (*pseud.*, Frank Gallagher), *The Four Glorious Years*, Irish Press, 1953, pp114-5, on repeated (usually failed) attempts to portray IRA activity as sectarian. On Phillips and Winter, note 32.

⁷⁵ See *Irish Times* 19 April; *Belfast Newsletter* 20 April; *Anglo Celt* 23 April, 7 May, 25 June; *Cork Examiner* 29 April; *Freeman's Journal* 23 June 1921. Dooley relied originally on the 22 April 1921 *Northern Standard* (as noted, reported by Dooley as 21 April). For census return, see <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Monaghan/Sheskin/Aghanameena/812306/> (accessed 15 March 2020).

⁷⁶ 'Access To Old Records', <https://www.cso.ie/en/census/aboutcensus2011/accesstoolrecords/> (accessed 6 August 2020).

brother referred to publicly as ‘weak minded’ and as an ‘invalid’.⁷⁷ It remains a mystery how Dooley originated his 1986 finding that permeated subsequent accounts, even after discovery of the error.⁷⁸ In declaring Carroll to be Protestant, McGarry and Dolan, followed by Ferriter, seemingly established their claims that she was not executed for informing but rather because, as a poor, single, feeble-minded, Protestant female, she was exemplary proof of a sectarian IRA that preyed on marginalised and vulnerable victims. She could join a pantheon of allegedly persecuted Protestants, whose treatment belied republican anti-sectarianism claims.

Instead of the discovery that Carroll was Catholic stimulating a critical reappraisal of previous interpretations, historians supplanted her now falsified Protestantism with poitín and love gone sour, as the proximate causes of her execution. Consequently, during the period 2010-17 university-based historians portrayed Carroll’s death in one of three ways.

In the first, as noted, Dolan and Ferriter had emphasised Carroll’s Protestant status. In the second, for instance in Queen’s University historian Marie Coleman’s 2014 contribution, her religious persuasion was ignored. Coleman’s brief commentary, derived from McGarry, promoted Kate Carroll’s ‘intellectually challenged poitín maker’ persona, ‘dispatched on a convenient charge of spying’. In Hanley’s second, 2015, edition of *The IRA: A Documentary History*, Carroll, was no longer Protestant, but the ‘illegal distilling’ explanation of her death, and wider allegation that the IRA targeted Protestants, ex-soldiers and ‘marginal figures’, remained.

In *Defying the IRA*, published in 2016, Brian Hughes ignored her religion. He briefly discussed Carroll’s death, alongside those of Mary Lindsay and Bridget Noble in Cork, as the three female exceptions to the IRA’s general ban on executing women. Finally, in *Monaghan, History & Society* (2017), in a chapter by Fiona Hughes on nationalist politics, Carroll was no longer characterised as Protestant or as a poitín maker.⁷⁹ Perhaps sadly, only a few lines were devoted to a now apparently less interesting casualty of war.

In a different category, in that they had previously published the ‘Protestant’ misattribution, Anne Dolan in 2015 and Fearghal McGarry in 2018 re-introduced Carroll but did not mention her once ‘Protestant’ past.⁸⁰

In the third approach, Marie Coleman in 2015 corrected and then rationalised the mistake regarding Carroll’s religion. Terence Dooley finally noted his error in 2017, but attempted to preserve the argument the error supported. To

From the Carroll household’s 1911 census return

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------|-----------|----|--------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Carroll | Susan | 71 | Female | Head of Family | Roman Catholic | Co Monaghan | Farmer | Cannot read |
| Carroll | Patrick | 49 | Male | Son | Roman Catholic | Co Monaghan | Farmers Son | Read and write |
| Carroll | Catherine | 26 | Female | Daughter | Roman Catholic | Co Monaghan | Lace Maker | Read and write |

this writer’s knowledge one historian, Brian Hanley in 2016, critically appraised his previous approach.

Before detailing that we should discuss a final important anomaly in the story of how Kate Carroll’s story was told.

5.1 Eunan O’Halpin’s analysis

The sole novel contribution to the mystery of Kate Carroll’s death was by Professor Eunan O’Halpin of TCD in 2006, in Australia. He wrote three accounts in all, in 2006 and in 2012 and 2013. Although they ignored Carroll’s religion and continued to mine the poitín theme, two introduced brand new evidence. The most important, in 2006, disclosed important, privately held and anonymised, IRA testimony. No other Irish historian writing on the subject appears to have been aware of it. When O’Halpin later discussed the same information in Ireland, its specific detail was obscured.

O’Halpin spoke in 2006 to the Australian Army’s annual ‘Chief of Army Military History Conference’, whose ‘not generally on open sale’ proceedings appeared online in 2018. The conference addressed ‘The theory and conduct of small wars and insurgencies’. Organisers observed that ‘Defining and then understanding the insurgent is part of the key to defeating him [sic]’. Speakers, many with practical experience, considered conflict in colonial hot spots, including Ireland, Malaya, Kenya, Vietnam, Rhodesia, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Iraq. Lessons learned fighting liberation forces in white-minority-ruled Rhodesia and South Africa were shared with conference participants.⁸¹

O’Halpin, a scholar exceptionally familiar with the histories of the British and Irish intelligence services, presented anonymised testimony on Kate Carroll’s death, to which only he had access (based on a family connection). His source was Thomas Brennan, who in 1921 was an IRA intelligence officer and second-in-command of the IRA’s 5th Northern Division. Brennan’s hand-written ‘I.R.A.’ notebook, composed in the 1930s, recently became available to scholars. It fleshed out the more terse IRA accounts of Kate Carroll’s fate cited previously. He reported ‘some very startling stories’, contained in letters that Crown informers had ‘addressed to RIC military’, but which the IRA had intercepted in Monaghan Post Office. The ‘stories’ gave ‘information about movements of [the] IRA’.

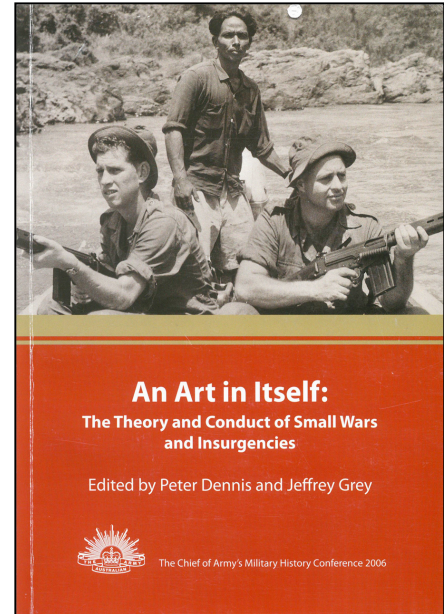
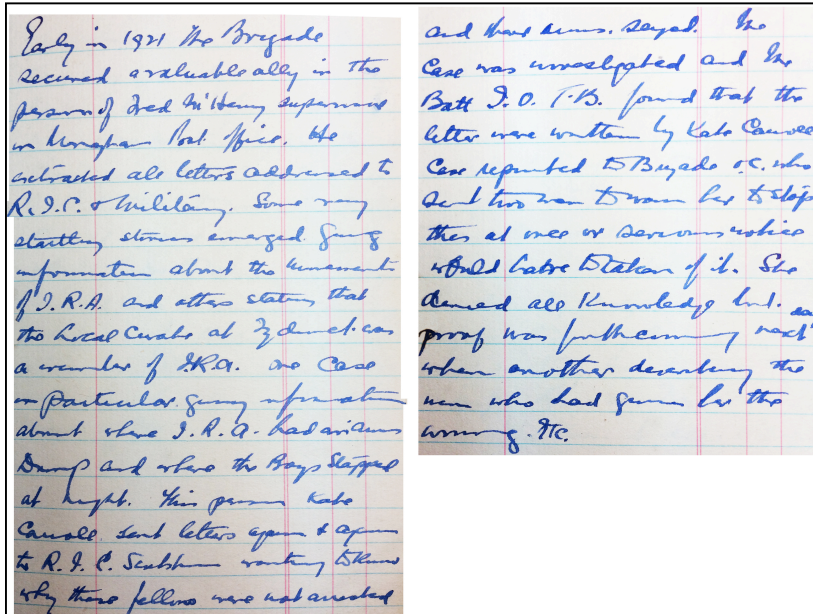
⁷⁷ *Northern Standard*, 22 Apr 1921, *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 Apr 1921. For Dooley, Patrick Carroll was ‘mentally challenged’, *The Irish Revolution 1912-23 Monaghan*, Four Courts, 2017, p91. Dolan thought him ‘deranged’, ‘Milestones’, p21.

⁷⁸ Originally Daithí Ó Corráin, who worked on a *Dead of the Revolution* database (see note 86), confirmed to Marie Coleman, Brian Hanley and Terence Dooley that Carroll was Catholic (personal communication, 2 November 2018).

⁷⁹ Brian Hughes, *Defying the IRA, Intimidation, Coercion, and Communities during the Irish Revolution*, 2016, Liverpool UP, pp136-7. Fiona Hughes, ‘Nationalist Politics’, p720.

⁸⁰ Marie Coleman, *Revolution 1916-23*, Routledge, 2013, p92. Brian Hanley, *The IRA a Documentary History*, 2nd ed., 2015, p18.

⁸¹ Eunan O’Halpin, ‘The Irish Experience of Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency Since 1919’, in Peter Dennis, Jeffrey Grey (eds), *An Art in Itself, the theory and conduct of small wars and insurgencies*, AHMP, 2006; Dennis, Grey, ‘Preface’, in *ibid*, pvi. Published in 2006, the work was ‘not generally on open sale’ (Peter Dennis, personal communication, 22 March 2020). Trinity College Dublin Library holds what appear to be the only two available hard copies in Ireland. A PDF publication became available online on 14 April 2018, at <https://www.army.gov.au/CAHC19> (analysis of Internet Archive, <https://web.archive.org>, 20 March 2020). The PDF construction date is 2011 but there is no evidence, apparent, of availability prior to 2018. I am grateful to Philip O’Conner for outlining his access to the work in TCD, while writing, ‘British war strategy, the SOE and the IRA’, *Irish Foreign Affairs*, April 2010.



Thomas Brennan on reason why Kate Carroll was executed. Referenced at 2006 Australian Army conference on 'Small Wars and Insurgencies', otherwise effectively unknown, obscured in 2012, 2013. Available here publicly for first time

Brennan highlighted,

One case in particular giving information about where [the] I.R.A. had an Arms Dump and where the Boys stopped at night. This person Kate Carroll sent letters again and again to R.I.C. Scotstown wanting to know why these fellows were not arrested and their arms seized.⁸²

Carroll's case was reported to Brigade O/C Eoin O'Duffy, who 'sent two men to warn [Carroll] to stop this at once or serious notice would have to be taken on it'. She denied giving information. However, 'proof was forthcoming next day' in that, as O'Halpin noted, Carroll wrote again to Scotstown RIC, 'describing the men who had given her the warning'. The instruction to cease informing was in accordance with the IRA's General Order 13 on 'Women Spies'.⁸³ It did not anticipate a recipient, treated leniently on grounds of gender, informing on those bearing, relatively, good news. Carroll's unwise decision may, exceptionally, have sealed her fate. It possibly also explained IRA volunteers' descriptions of a 'scarcely normal' 'half-wit'.

Surprisingly, after presenting Brennan's seemingly solid testimony, for some reason O'Halpin proceeded to contradict it. He persisted in describing Carroll as an 'alleged informer' who had 'supposedly given information' and whose letters to the RIC were 'demented' rather than informative. Thus, O'Halpin could assert that Carroll's was 'the most notorious killing ... that of a destitute semi-literate distiller'. O'Halpin's audience, veterans of larger scale imperialist counter-insurgencies, were perhaps confirmed in their view of IRA 'terrorists'. Republicans had, said O'Halpin, committed a 'ghastly killing of an

insignificant woman, known to be unbalanced'.⁸⁴

Dissecting O'Halpin's description, Carroll's 'destitute' status was assumed not proved. Where is evidence that her letters were 'demented'? None have apparently survived. The IRA attested to her 'unbalanced' status when she persisted in informing after being warned. As to her alleged semi-literacy, 1901 and 1911 census returns report her ability to 'read and write'. Although semi-literate persons might have difficulty writing 'again and again' to the RIC, Kate Carroll seemingly experienced no such problem. Most important, why did O'Halpin assert that Carroll was 'supposedly' or an 'alleged' informer?

Since an IRA court martial was not a trial in the orthodox sense, that might account for O'Halpin's use of 'alleged' and 'supposed'. But Brennan's and other IRA testimony identified quite precisely Carroll's informer status. Brennan's testimony also explained how they obtained Carroll's letters and why they considered both her and her messages to the RIC significant and dangerous. Must such historical evidence from Irish republican sources be disparaged or dismissed, particularly if it conflicts with official statements, 'establishment' accounts or even obvious British propaganda? Nevertheless, however much he disapproved of the outcome, O'Halpin had revealed in detail the charge against Kate Carroll. Unfortunately, other historians writing on the subject remained unaware of O'Halpin's presentation and Brennan's notebook.

In 2012 and 2013 O'Halpin considered Carroll afresh, this time in accessible accounts. In 2012 O'Halpin cited McGarry, briefly noting that Carroll's execution was due to 'social deviance' in 'keeping an illicit still'.⁸⁵ He again ignored Carroll's religious status but for some reason also ignored Thomas Brennan's testimony, though he cited it in his endnotes, as a 'private collection', alongside Marron and

⁸² The Thomas Brennan material was donated to Monaghan County Museum in September 2015 by his son, Pat, married to an aunt of O'Halpin's, Thomas Brennan papers, 'I.R.A.' notebook, Monaghan County Museum, 206.190.25. See, 'Museum curator Liam gives presentation at Tydavnet Historical Society', 18 April 2018, <http://tydavnet.com/news/2018/04/museum-curator-liam-gives-presentation-tydavnet-his-torical-society-april-2018/> (accessed 19 January 2020). I examined the material on 16 January 2020. My thanks again to Theresa Loftus of Monaghan County Museum for facilitating access.

⁸³ The order appears in Hanley, *IRA, a Documentary History*, p18.

⁸⁴ O'Halpin, *Insurgency*, p57

⁸⁵ 'Problematic killing during the war of independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers', in Mary-Ann Lyons, James Kelly (eds.), *Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives*, IAP, 2013, pp336, 347n64 (based on an Irish Conference of Historians conference in June 2011).

BMH material.⁸⁶ In 2013 O'Halpin reintroduced the still privately-held evidence. Brennan was again cited by name in the endnotes, but was not mentioned in O'Halpin's main text. Instead, O'Halpin reduced the most detailed available IRA explanation for Carroll's execution to a few lines that essentially regurgitated McGarry's poitín-based story, which Brennan's testimony had at the least called into question:

[Carroll] resented IRA interference in her distilling and wrote chaotic letters to the RIC in Scotstown denouncing their inaction against the IRA and rival illicit distillers. Some of these were intercepted by an IRA informant in Monaghan Post Office. She was warned off, but wrote another letter.⁸⁷

This synopsis, although produced for wider circulation, is obviously problematic. Poitín distillation is given as the basis of Carroll's informing and as the overriding factor in her death, but Brennan had not even mentioned it. No source was provided for the assertion that Carroll's letters to the RIC had previously been 'demented' but were now 'chaotic', or that, in another evidence-free claim, they 'denounc[ed] ... rival illicit distillers'. Inexplicably absent from this account is Brennan's assertion that Carroll described to the RIC IRA volunteers who warned her to cease informing and that she pinpointed the location of IRA arms and personnel.

Instead, O'Halpin drew readers' attention to additional new information. While no IRA testimony discussed alcohol, it featured in 1960s observations by Nuala O'Neil, an IRA veteran's daughter.

O'Halpin's main text mistakenly presented Charlie O'Neill as the author of his daughter's commentary. She wrote on 'things that bothered' 'my father' (referred to also as 'Daddy'), who was in prison when Carroll was shot. As compared with his cursory treatment of a participant, Brennan, O'Halpin devoted considerable attention to O'Neill's theories of forty-plus years later, and reproduced much of her text. She wrote, apparently based on her father's memories, that Carroll was 'often seen around the barracks ... selling poteen to soldiers and anyone who would buy it'. O'Halpin interjected his own opinion that Carroll 'was considered harmless', whereas, by contrast, O'Neill wrote that Carroll was perceived as 'having 'talked

a bit' and therefore 'the IRA began to suspect her of carrying tales'. Nuala O'Neill continued, in a passage that O'Halpin cited at length, ascribed to Charlie O'Neill and juxtaposed to the now-obscured Brennan testimony, 'It is now thought [in the 1960s] that one of the volunteers himself was an informer but deliberately shifted the blame on to Kate Carroll'. O'Neill did not discuss why or how or by whom this 'thought' had occurred. Nor did she address the identity, if known, of the supposed IRA informer.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, O'Halpin's text promoted the possibility that Kate Carroll had indeed been an innocent victim.

Of course, O'Neill may have been right, and it is important that O'Halpin presented and considered seriously her speculation. But it is not immediately apparent why O'Halpin wrapped in anonymity and comparative obscurity an alternative, more explicit, and arguably more authoritative testimony, by an IRA commandant. To be fair, O'Halpin did acknowledge that 'One Monaghan veteran wrote "the proof [against Carroll] was very strong"', but he did not identify (even in his end notes) that veteran, the previously cited James McKenna. Quite astonishingly, O'Halpin then stated that:

...the man who investigated the letters [Kate Carroll's to the RIC] wrote an apologetic and incomplete account emphasising that the unwelcome execution order came from the Brigade O/C Eoin O'Duffy, a man always happy to have others pull the trigger on supposed informers.

Either this passage is based on an unidentified source or it misinterprets Brennan's text.⁸⁹

Since she did not mention it, Nuala O'Neill appears to have been unaware of the contents or interception of Carroll's RIC correspondence. Her opinions, like those of contemporary historians, may have been residually influenced by Dublin Castle publicity. Another factor, however, should be considered. The text and a separate, also handwritten, summary of her father's recollections display an abiding animosity toward Eoin O'Duffy. He became a controversial Free State Garda Commissioner, a scourge of those who opposed the Treaty during and after the Civil War. In February 1933 a new anti-Treaty Fianna Fáil government dismissed him. O'Duffy then led the proto-fascist Army Comrades Association, 'the Blueshirts', which violently opposed both Fianna Fáil and the IRA.⁹⁰

It is possible that later antipathy toward O'Duffy affected Nuala O'Neil's commentary on the earlier period. Charlie O'Neill's text, describing his experiences, contains no hint of his daughter's opinions. The latter included an observation O'Halpin repeated at length, that her grandfather's death in 1922, from erysipelas ('erisipalis'), was influenced by either Carroll's execution a year earlier, or her father's IRA membership. That family misfortune may also belatedly have coloured Nuala O'Neill's attitude.

⁸⁶ 'Counting Terror: Bloody Sunday and the Dead of the Irish Revolution', in David Fitzpatrick, ed., *Terror in Ireland*, Lilliput, 2012, p154 (based on a November 2010 TCD Workshop seminar, p2). O'Halpin is engaged (previously with Daithí Ó Corráin, *Terror*, p155) in an Irish Research Council funded project on 'The Dead of the Irish Revolution', initiated in 2003. O'Halpin's TCD web page stated, (in late 2018), 'The first volume [of the 'The Dead of the Irish Revolution'] ... will be published by Yale University Press in 2011 [sic]', <https://www.tcd.ie/research/profiles/?profile=ohalpine> (accessed 18 October 2018). Anne Dolan reported, 2015, that it would be 'forthcoming' in 2016, "'Spies and informers beware'", in Diarmaid Ferriter, Susannah O'Riordan (eds.), *Years of Turbulence, the Irish Revolution and its Aftermath*, UCD, 2015, p275n6. O'Halpin's 2013 essay (p317) discussed the research. His web page states currently (14 July 2020), 'Professor O'Halpin has just completed research for a major study of The Dead of the Irish Revolution 1916-1921'. Yale University Press states that that the work, by O'Halpin plus Ó Corráin, will appear on 27 October 2020, <https://yalebooks.co.uk/display.asp?K=9780300123821> (accessed, 14 July 2020).

⁸⁷ O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p336.

⁸⁸ Nuala O'Neill, 'Things that bothered C. O'Neill re events of 1919-23', handwritten, (1960s), observations in Sean O'Mahony Papers, NLI, 44,046/5 (reported as '44064', in O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing' p347.).

⁸⁹ O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p336. O'Halpin's interpretation appears based on Brennan concluding his account with 'Etc.', a view he expressed in 2006., p57.

⁹⁰ Cian McMahon, 'Eoin O'Duffy's Blueshirts and the Abyssinian crisis', *History Ireland*, v10, n2, Summer, 2002. See also McGarry, *Duffy*.

In summary, it is possible that if Thomas Brennan's explanation of Kate Carroll's execution had been widely known in or after 2006, and/or not obscured in 2012-13, historians might have written quite differently. On the other hand, although O'Halpin was aware of Brennan's testimony, it did not seem to greatly affect his own interpretation. One other point, by not giving Carroll a false Protestant identity in 2006, perhaps O'Halpin was at least tacitly acknowledging that Dooley's and McGarry's earlier contentions on the subject were no longer tenable. If so, that insight, in addition to Brennan's testimony, might have been useful to Hanley in 2010, Dolan (a TCD colleague) in 2011 and Ferriter in 2015.

5.2 Quiet correction

Although Marie Coleman was not responsible for what was then a 29-year-old erroneous claim that Kate Carroll was a Protestant, in 2015 she became the first scholar to publicly correct the mistake. Unaware of Thomas Brennan, she attempted to rationalise the error away. This was within a collection of historical essays on *The Years of Turbulence*, of which Diarmaid Ferriter was one editor. Anne Dolan in a separate contribution also returned to Kate Carroll's fate.

In her essay, Coleman noted that historians had previously made the 'mistaken assumption' that Carroll was a Protestant. In her endnotes, Coleman identified Dooley and McGarry—but for some reason not Dolan—as promoters of the Carroll-as-Protestant narrative. Her main text appeared to excuse the error. Coleman asserted that the IRA's exceptional execution of a woman had 'led historians to question whether there was a sectarian motive to Carroll's killing'.⁹¹ Leaving aside the fact that Dooley and McGarry (plus Dolan) had not 'question[ed]' but had promoted a sectarian motive for Carroll's execution, Coleman here seemed to suggest that historians had believed that Carroll's fate was more readily sealed if she were a Protestant, rather than a Roman Catholic, woman. Put another way, the historians' own pre-existing, and arguably sectarian, assumptions both encouraged and excused their publication of historical fiction.

After loss of the Protestant misattribution Coleman then proceeded to buttress McGarry's ancillary (i.e., non-sectarian) explanation for 'Kate (or Kitty)' Carroll's execution—the same one O'Halpin had more recently promoted, namely:

While she did give information to the police, it was about rival poitin makers, not about IRA men... [T]he conclusion of Fearghal McGarry that "the charge of spying appears to have been a convenient rationale for the execution of an obvious security risk" is compelling.⁹²

After this statement, as with McGarry ten years earlier, Coleman's text segued into County Cork and Peter Hart's

questionable sectarianism analysis. For example, she repeated Hart's statistic that only '15 per cent of houses "burned by the IRA in Cork... belonged to Catholics"',⁹³ failing to acknowledge that the IRA burned the relatively large dwellings of active (and mainly Protestant) loyalists in retaliation for Crown forces systematically burning the more modest homes of suspected (and mainly Roman Catholic) republicans. As Tom Barry put it,

Castles, mansions and residences were sent up in flames by the IRA immediately after the British fire gangs had razed the homes of Irish republicans.⁹⁴

A curious feature of this discussion is that no historian thought to accuse British forces of sectarianism, for failure to incinerate a proportionate amount of Protestant-owned houses. To express it another way, the governing historiographical rule among revisionist historians seems to be that, whereas a Roman Catholic should not be considered a sectarian victim, a Protestant in similar circumstances must be—until proven otherwise. If that is the standard historians are encouraged to adopt, it is itself sectarian.⁹⁵

Anne Dolan, in a separate contribution to the same *Years of Turbulence* volume, also returned to Kate Carroll's fate. Although Dolan now benefited from the Court of Inquiry report into Carroll's execution, she re-presented a main theme of her 2011 essay, focusing on how 'etiquettes of war have been breached ... disregarded and undone', with considerable melodramatic padding:

Suspicion comes more easily than trust; a name on a black list is more willingly written than erased; and the procedures for dealing with suspected spies—rules and regulations, required proofs and approvals from a Brigade Commandant—are more likely overlooked as suspicion grows, as the threats seem to increase, as spies and informers can be seen in every staring face and treason heard in every whispered word, when the violence moves with a more desperate momentum towards its end.

Foulkes' views of 'war between savage tribes' were again included, as was a British House of Commons statement that Carroll's 'murder' was designed to 'cause[...] a feeling of terror in the district'.⁹⁶

On the other hand, Dolan's commentary on alcohol distillation, on sectarian and romantic permutations imposed on a once-Protestant Kate Carroll's sad fate, factors that four years earlier had loomed so large, evaporated in a puff of historical smoke. Appropriately, if inaccurately, the *Sunday Times* (12 December 2015) headlined an extract from Dolan's essay: 'Agatha Christie approach solves mysteries of Irish revolution'.

⁹³ Coleman, 'Violence', p140.

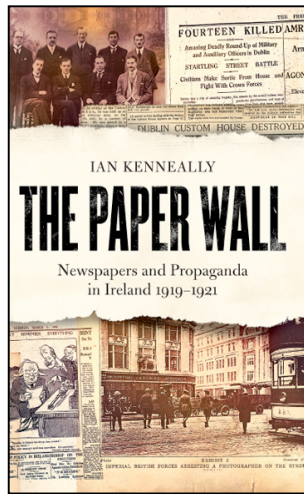
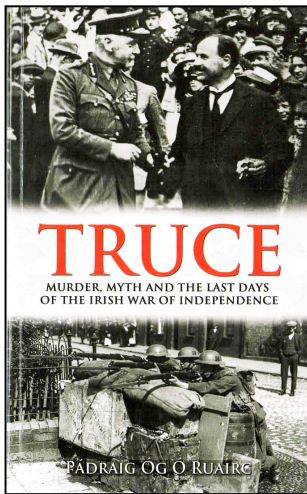
⁹⁴ Barry, *Guerilla Days*, p116.

⁹⁵ Many Protestant owned businesses were burned, by default, when Crown forces torched Cork city centre on 12 December 1920, Gerry White, Brendan O'Shea, *The Burning of Cork*, Mercier, 2006, pp207–10. Fifty business premises, Cork City Hall, and the city's library were gutted. Eighty-nine premises in total were burned, damaged, or wrecked.

⁹⁶ Anne Dolan, "'Spies and informers beware'", pp159, 162, 163, 166, 171, 276n29. Dolan referred to Lloyd George's dispute with the Bishop of Chelmsford and '19 other leaders of various religious denominations', but did not state that they were all Protestant, p275, n20. See note 70.

⁹¹ Marie Coleman, 'Violence Against Women During the Irish War of Independence', in Diarmaid Ferriter, O'Riordan (eds), *Years of Turbulence*, pp139-40, 151, 162; see p272, n18, for McGarry, Dooley, reference. Coleman also contributed, 'Carroll had written to the police not about IRA activity, but that of rival poitin-makers, but was shot as an alleged spy nonetheless', in 'Women escaped the worst of the brutalities in the War of Independence', *Examiner*, 27 November 2015.

⁹² Coleman, 'Violence', pp139-40, 151, 162.



Pádraig Ó Ruairc questioned IRA sectarianism thesis. Ian Kenneally study, a 2008 outlier that examined Dáil Publicity and IRA HQ view of Carroll shooting. No interest in Carroll's occupation.

Newspapers and Propaganda 1919-1921 (2008), explored the IRA headquarters and the Dáil publicity department's view of Carroll's execution. Members of both bodies discussed what appeared to be a violation of IRA 'General Order No. 13', in which 'Women Spies' should be warned or (if not Irish) deported, along with consideration of the possible negative effect that killing a woman might have on public sentiment. As in Brennan's and other republican accounts, the discussants expressed no interest in Carroll's religion or occupation. Pearse Lawlor's *The Outrages* (2011), on violence along the new six-county frontier, suggested that a Roman Catholic Carroll was drawn into an arrangement with the RIC, beneficial to her whiskey making and to their intelligence requirements.¹⁰⁰ These accounts were early outliers, in comparison to those from university-based historians.

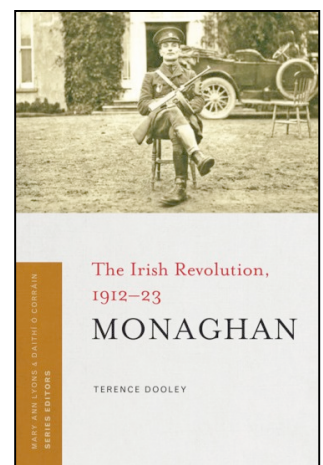
More recently Pádraig Ó Ruairc, an academically trained historian but not in a full-time university post, also commented. His *Truce, Murder Myth and the last Days of the Irish war of Independence* (2016, based on PhD research) contains a thorough critique of the revisionist sectarianism thesis. He listed the religious affiliation of all those whom the IRA executed as spies, including Kate Carroll as a Roman Catholic.¹⁰¹

5.4 Terence Dooley's correction

McGarry and Dooley, the originators of the mistaken sectarianism narrative, reconnected with Carroll in 2017 and 2018. One of them admitted to their shared error. In his 2017 monograph on Monaghan in the series, *The Irish Revolution 1912-23*, Terence Dooley, originator of the then 31-year-old Protestant-Kate-Carroll myth, re-introduced her as a 'Catholic spinster'. He asserted that, 'the contemporary newspapers stated that Carroll was a Protestant, thereby suggesting a sectarian dimension to her murder'. He also now endorsed as 'highly probable', McGarry's opinion that Carroll was executed because she was 'an anti-social security risk', who 'had come to the IRA's attention for illicit distilling'. Although Dooley noted that 'the IRA did not kill poitín-makers', he argued that 'Kate Carroll had compounded her offence by writing to the RUC on other illicit distillers'. Otherwise, Dooley ignored his and McGarry's sectarianism error, merely observing in an endnote that,

In earlier work, I mistakenly identified Carroll as a Protestant as stated in newspaper reports of the time.

Dooley corrects Carroll mistake with more errors



Only one historian, to my knowledge, has reflected self-critically on his former mislabelling of Kate Carroll as Protestant. In a 2016 review article, Brian Hanley observed that historians writing on the 'contentious' subject of sectarianism 'must do so with care'. Diarmaid Ferriter's mistake, in *A Nation Not a Rabble*, in describing Carroll 'as a Protestant [...] is mine', admitted Hanley, who continued, I have since been corrected, but I had made the assumption that she was Protestant (O'Carroll [sic] was described as such in several accounts) without checking the relevant source material.⁹⁷

In accepting responsibility for relying on the mistakes of unnamed historians (Dooley and/or McGarry), Hanley did not mention Ferriter's more extensive reliance on Dolan's research. Ferriter appeared, for whatever reason, to be absolved from checking sources.⁹⁸ In the absence of tenured academic historians being in a position to adequately evaluate evidence, that task falls to others.

Despite Coleman's correction, a Protestant Kate Carroll appeared in *Uncertain Futures*, a 2017 book of essays for Roy Foster. Tim Wilson's otherwise incisive dissection of 'The Strange Death of Loyalist Monaghan' described Protestants as having a 'heterogeneous' existence, ranging from landowners like the Rossmores and Leslies (both with estates above 13,000 acres) down to Kitty Carroll (a poitín-maker living "on a few acres of wretched mountain land").⁹⁹

We know now that Carroll was not an exceptionally poor Protestant. As a typically impoverished papist, her circumstances left her ripe for RIC exploitation.

5.3 Extra-mural outperform the tenured

Two early exceptions by historians not based in university departments should be noted. Ian Kenneally's comprehensive and stimulating (MPhil-based), *Paper Wall*,

⁹⁷ Brian Hanley, 'Moderates and Peacemakers': Irish Historians and the Revolutionary Centenary', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 2016, v43, n1, p123. Hanley's reference to 'O'Carroll' was replicated in, 'Fear and loathing at Coolacrease', *History Ireland*, v16, n1, Jan-Feb 2008.

⁹⁸ Hanley's *IRA a Documentary History* (2010, 2015) sourced illustrations and included a 'select' bibliography that included McGarry's Duffy biography but not Dooley's research,

⁹⁹ Tim Wilson (citing Fearghal McGarry), 'Strange Death', pp177-8. Wilson footnoted Carroll's death, again citing McGarry, in his earlier *Frontiers of Violence, Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia*, OUP, 2010, p119, n6. He named Carroll as Protestant on p151, n169. The same note claimed as a Protestant IRA victim, process-server Bernard Mailey who, according to the 1911 census, was also, in fact, Roman Catholic, http://census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Donegal/Raphoe/The_Close/5066_24, (accessed 27 July 2020).

¹⁰⁰ Ian Kenneally, *Paper Wall, Newspapers and Propaganda 1919-1921*, Collins, 2008, pp61, 62. Pearse Lawlor, *The Outrages, 1920-22, the IRA and the Ulster Special Constabulary in the Border Campaign*, Mercier, 2011, p145.

¹⁰¹ Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, p104.

The explanation sounds plausible. Unfortunately, it is not factual. In his new book Dooley cited no newspapers in which the identification of 'Carroll as a Protestant' had appeared. That was for good reason: there were none.¹⁰²

For instance, the *Northern Standard* report of Carroll's death, which Dooley habitually cited, said nothing about her religion. Neither did other newspaper reports; nor did her family's June 1921 petition for compensation. Moreover, in his endnotes Dooley identified only one of his four earlier texts in which his mistake had appeared. That also was less than satisfactory.

The correction of one error (Carroll was Protestant) with yet another (erroneous press reports led me astray) suggests at best that Dooley did not revisit his sources when preparing to explain his mistake. The suspicion is reinforced by a still-inaccurate citation of the *Northern Standard* publication-date report of Carroll's death.¹⁰³ As a result, to this day the precise origin of Dooley's myth is unclear. Dooley's new account did contain one further curiosity: 'Primary Sources' lists on page 153, 'Thomas Brennan papers'. But Dooley's text ignored Brennan's account of Carroll's execution. In so doing, Dooley repeated his 1986-2000 omission of Marron Collection testimony.

However, in his 2017 monograph Dooley silently revised his earlier allied allegation that 'many [IRA] volunteers were involved in... sectarian crimes'. Instead, he now acknowledged that 1916-23 witnessed a 'low incidence of sectarian murders in Monaghan'.¹⁰⁴

Rather than credit Irish republicans' commitment to non-sectarianism for this happy circumstance, Dooley speculated that it 'may have been largely due to the unionist community's ability to protect itself'. Confusingly, and in contrast to Eunan O'Hallpin's view of the future 'Blueshirt' / Fine Gael leader Eoin O'Duffy, as trigger happy, Dooley asserted, without any visible evidence, that,

... but for [IRA leader Eoin] O'Duffy's restraining influence, the number of sectarian casualties would have been much higher... By extension this suggests that the rank and file were intent on sectarian violence, motivated by revenge possibly embedded in historical ancestral grievances or jealousies as much as contemporary events'.

Dooley's new but equally evidence-free theory alleged that the IRA was still murderously sectarian, but less successfully than previously supposed. Dooley thus preserved his original argument with a new but vacuous claim, despite having abandoned the previous 'evidence' that formerly had sustained it.¹⁰⁵

5.5 Historians and sectarian violence

Like McGarry, Dooley espoused a loose, broad, and contradictory definition of sectarian violence, which included republican attacks on members of the paramilitary

Sectarianism everyday: North, South... and Palestine

Like Fearghal McGarry and Terence Dooley, Gemma Clarke's *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* illustrates problems with north-south sectarian equivalencies. In a paragraph beginning, 'That is not to say, of course, that fire starting was the sole preserve of republicans', Clarke referred to Belfast's 'so-called pogroms'. A Clarke footnote detailed that from July 1920 onwards nearly one quarter of Belfast's 93,000 Roman Catholics were expelled from their jobs, 23,000 were put out of their homes, while '500 Catholic commercial premises were looted, burned or otherwise wrecked'. Clarke dwelt also on what happened after the IRA killed Banbridge Co Down native and Munster Divisional Police Commissioner, Gerard Smyth, on 17 July in Cork. Reportedly, he had ordered the RIC in Kerry to shoot on sight without repercussions, resulting in the Listowel RIC mutiny led by Constable Jeremiah Mee. After Smyth's death, expulsions of Catholic workers in Belfast were redoubled. The burial in Banbridge witnessed unionist 'crowds' torching Catholic owned pubs and other businesses.

Clarke described, in addition, reaction to the August 1920 IRA shooting of District Inspector Oswald Swanzy in Lisburn, County Antrim. An inquest jury in Cork considered him responsible for the March assassination of Lord Mayor Tomás Mac Curtain. Hence Swanzy's departure northwards. After he was killed, allegedly using Mac Curtain's gun, 'large areas of the Catholic part of [Lisburn] were set ablaze in what Clarke called 'reciprocal burnings', that lasted 'three days'. Refugees fled to Belfast where similar destruction was under foot. Finally, after the shooting of a 'Belfast Special' in May 1922, Clarke observed that 'a loyalist mob burned an entire Catholic street', making 86 families homeless. She referred to, 'bouts of sectarian violence... in a familiar cycle of violence and counter violence'.

In noting (literally) evidence of collective punishment (of which this is just a snapshot), Clarke rather missed the point of difference, in terms of sheer scale and intent, between republican and loyalist targeting.

Perhaps her most surprising (and bizarre) innovation was to compare treatment of southern Irish loyalists with the expulsion, accompanied by massacres, of 750,000 Palestinians when Israel was formed in 1948. Her empathy toward Palestinians is, though, less evident than toward Irish loyalists. She asserted that the Palestinian expulsions constitute a 'propaganda issue'. Furthermore, 'intimidation was deliberately used in Munster as [merely] allegedly it was in Palestine' (a sentence that would be improved by reversing locations). In fact, as David Fitzpatrick pointed out, the War of Independence did not noticeably affect the pattern of Protestant emigration. Many of the small number of loyalists who left did so temporarily, a right denied to four million Palestinians today in vast impoverished refugee camps.

Sources: Clarke, *Everyday*, pp58-9, 100, 102, 104. For a fuller account of May 1922 violence, Lynch, *Northern IRA*, pp152-3. On Smyth, see Jeremiah Mee, note 53. On Swanzy, Brendan O'Leary, *A Treatise on Northern Ireland, Volume II: Control*, OUP, 2019, pp22-3; Michael Farrell, *Northern Ireland, the Orange State*, 1976, pp30-1. On Belfast expulsions, Geoff Bell, *Hesitant Comrades, the Irish Revolution and the British Labour Movement*, Pluto, 2016, pp85-94. See also, Brendan O'Leary, 'Cold House': the Unionist counter-revolution and the invention of Northern Ireland', in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, pp818-27. On Palestinian Nakba, see Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, One World, 2007. For an astute, extended, review of Clarke, Gavin Foster, 'Ordinary Brutalities', <https://www.drb.ie/essays/ordinary-brutalities> (accessed, 7 June 2020).

Ulster Special Constabulary and on loyalists who had shot IRA volunteers. For example, Dooley asserted that the March 1921 killing of a father and son named Fleming, who earlier had shot dead an IRA volunteer on an arms raid, exemplified 'the most brutal sectarian killings in Monaghan'. Yet, on the following page, in describing the Flemings' loyalist paramilitary funeral, Dooley stated that the Flemings 'were not killed because of their religion'.¹⁰⁶

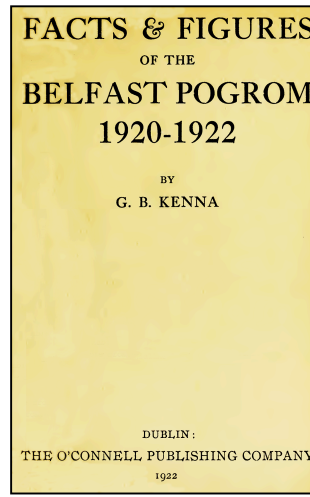
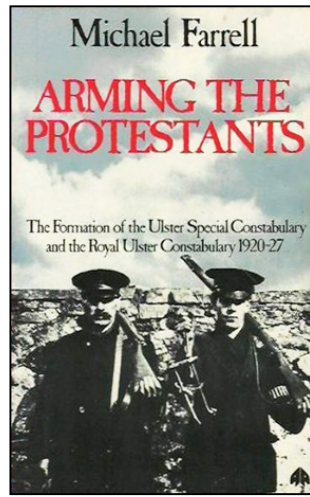
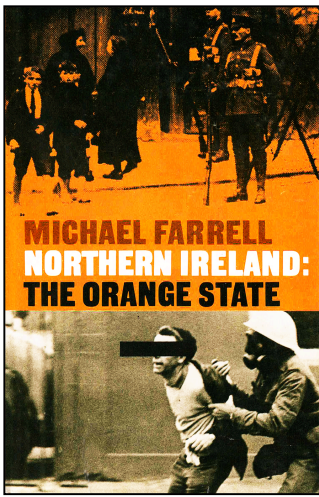
¹⁰² Dooley, *The Irish Revolution 1912-23 Monaghan*, Four Courts, 2017, pp91-2, explanation at p146n154. Dooley cited his 'Monaghan Protestants', pp240-1 (1990). He excised the rest, see notes 28, 29.

¹⁰³ For newspapers mentioning Carroll's execution, see notes 70, 75. For Dooley's repetition of an incorrect publication date, see *Irish Revolution*, p146, n157.

¹⁰⁴ Dooley, *Unionist Politics*, p19; *Monaghan Protestants*, p44;

¹⁰⁵ Dooley, *Irish Revolution Monaghan*, pp92, 94 (emph. in original).

¹⁰⁶ Dooley, *Irish Revolution Monaghan*, pp93-4.



"On the 21st of July, and on succeeding dates, every Roman Catholic—whether ex-service man who had proved his loyalty to England during the Great War, or Sinn Féiner who claims to be loyal to Ireland and Ireland alone—was expelled from the shipyards and other works; a number were flung into the river and while struggling for life were pelted with rivets and washers; others were brutally beaten, but the majority, hearing of the fate of their fellows, escaped injury by beating a hasty retreat, leaving behind costly tools and other personal belongings. Almost 10,000 workers are at present affected, and on several occasions men have attempted to resume work only to find the 'loyal' men still determined to keep them out. I am informed that one Catholic has been permitted to start on the Queen's Island—one out of thousands, assuming the report is true."

James Baird, expelled Protestant worker, details anti-Catholic pogrom that began in Belfast shipyards in July 1920 (from Kenna, p30, at <https://www.academia.edu/6318325/>). Michael Farrell on formation of Northern state and RUC, B-Specials, summarises course of violence

It seems clear from Tim Wilson's account that in 1919-21 Monaghan loyalists were well-armed and aggressive, but that they were militarily defeated by Irish republican forces. Put another way, they were unable to impose the kind of repressive control over nationalists that their unionist peers successfully imposed in the Six Counties. However, in defeating loyalist sectarianism in Monaghan, Irish republicans did not reverse-engineer it.

Dooley ignored these distinctions. He construed as sectarian a 1920 republican boycott of goods produced in Belfast, although it was in response to, '11,000 Catholic nationalists ... expelled [by unionist mobs] from their jobs in Belfast', accompanied by the killing of 455 people, 58% of them Roman Catholics who comprised 24% of the city's overall population.¹⁰⁷

McGarry's approach in his O'Duffy biography approach was similar. There, support for the boycott 'raised sectarian tensions.' Does that imply that opposition to sectarianism was itself sectarian? While the Belfast boycott may be criticised as ineffective, it was motivated to restore to their jobs those expelled from their workplaces, and to deter then rampant loyalist violence. Dooley and McGarry have in common that they overlooked or deemphasised virulent *loyalist* sectarian actions, but characterised (and distorted) republican responses as sectarian.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, they failed to note that loyalist retaliation for republican attacks tended to be indiscriminate 'collective punishment', aimed at the nearest available Roman Catholics, and included, 'repeated targeting of priests'. The IRA, on the other hand, usually turned its weapons on those identified as actual combatants (see also, boxed off section, page 18).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Dooley, *Irish Revolution 1912-23 Monaghan*, p95;

¹⁰⁸ McGarry, *Duffy*, p57. 'Rotten Prods' were expelled also, in the main socialists and trade unionists opposed to unionist sectarianism. See G.B. Kenna (*pseud.*, Fr. John Hassan), *Facts and Figures of the Belfast Pogroms*, O'Connell Publ. Co., 1922 (available at, <https://www.academia.edu/6318325/>, accessed 20 Jun. 2020). Kenna sagely observed that some Protestant victims were killed because they were thought to be Catholic, while others were shot while engaged in shooting at Catholics.

¹⁰⁹ See Wilson, 'Strange Death', pp182-5. Also, Robert Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the Early Years of Partition, 1920-22*, IAP, 2006, pp52-3. In an earlier study, in an attempt to compare violence in Ulster and Upper Silesia, Tim Wilson also missed these differences, despite writing that, as distinct from loyalists, 'nationalists rarely seem to have implied that loyalists were intrinsically different from themselves', and that nationalists 'were markedly more reluctant than loyalists to expel *'the other side'* from their homes', Wilson, *Frontiers*, pp136, 137.

5.6 Fearghal McGarry reintroduces Kate Carroll

In 2018 Fearghal McGarry twice returned to Kate Carroll's fate. In 'Revolution 1916-1923', Volume Four of the *Cambridge History of Ireland*, he observed, without indicating Carroll's religion,

In Monaghan republicans killed Kate Carroll (described by one IRA man as 'a half-wit') because her involvement in poitin-making gave rise to concerns about spying, but her marginal status and more intimate factors may have contributed to her death.¹¹⁰

Unlike Dooley, but following Dolan's example, McGarry made no reference to his earlier Carroll-as-'Protestant spinster' claim. He referenced without comment, however, his 2005 biography of O'Duffy plus Ferriter's 2015 account, in which a 'Protestant' Kate Carroll had featured. Thus, McGarry's assertion that 'more intimate factors may have contributed to her death', relied on Ferriter's use of Anne Dolan's romantically-rebuffed-Protestant-woman narrative. The problematic original source for Dolan's 2011 allegation—Monaghan County Museum's curator, not repeated in her own 2015 essay—was thereby doubly, if not triply, obscured in McGarry's reiteration of Dolan's claim via Ferriter. If Dolan's story really has a factual basis, it is not yet available to historians.

In another 2018 commentary, on newly released IRA Brigade Activity Reports, McGarry cited again his biography of O'Duffy. On this occasion an unnamed Carroll became simply 'a female poitin-distiller, whose perceived lack of respectability increased her vulnerability in a climate of terror'.¹¹¹ Now we have come full circle, back to McGarry's 2005 claim that Carroll's Protestantism, poitin distilling, alleged weak mindedness, marginality, and 'perceived lack of respectability' contributed to her death.

Once the sectarian motive was discarded, and available IRA testimony ignored, the residue of McGarry's poitin-related narrative became the central causative factor in Carroll's death. It was widely recycled, most recently by Dooley in 2019 in a Monaghan County Museum exhibition booklet:

¹¹⁰ Fearghal McGarry, 'Revolution, 1916-1923', in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *Cambridge History of Ireland*, Volume Four, CUP, 2018, p282. Here, McGarry retreated from some claims made by Peter Hart, but still considered his findings 'compelling', pp281-2.

¹¹¹ "Living under an alien despotism": the IRA campaign in Ulster', *The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection, the Brigade Activity Reports*, Department of Defence, Ireland, 2018, p88.

Carroll came to the IRA's attention for illicit distilling, a practice that the IRA waged war against. She had compounded her offence by writing to the RIC informing on other illicit distillers [...] Kate was an informer, but not about IRA activity.¹¹²

Dooley also repeated his earlier mistake about Carroll's father being alive to mourn her death.

Finally, we must take a draught from this last standing evidential shard, the now-crucial *poitín* narrative. Although in 2017 Dooley listed Thomas Brennan's papers as one of his sources, neither his texts nor McGarry's indicate any familiarity with Brennan's actual testimony on the Carroll case. If they read it they did not consider it or other contemporary IRA sources as credible evidence regarding Carroll's fate. They ignored, except to deny, the possibility that Kate Carroll had actually been a Crown informer on the IRA. McGarry and Dooley are now, metaphorically, left holding a bag that contained rather vague, contradictory, and inconclusive but *poitín*-related evidence from Patrick Carroll and from the RIC.¹¹³ Patrick Carroll reportedly stated at the 19 April British Military Court of Inquiry that his sister's captors asked her, 'are you making any drink now?'. He reportedly stated that she had 'been fined by the government for making illicit whiskey', to whom she 'would not pay any more fines'. Furthermore, she was 'raided many times by the IRA for making whiskey'.¹¹⁴ Significantly, Patrick Carroll's transcribed inquiry statement also contained the following,

I found Kate's dead body in a lane at Drumscore next morning, at about 7am. I brought the body home.¹¹⁵

This claim, from a publicly identified 'weak minded' 'invalid', is problematic. Two detailed statements contradicted it—one from Carroll's first cousin. These explained who had encountered Carroll's body in Drumscore, over a mile from the Carroll home, and the manner in which her remains were returned in a handcart. Neither his first cousin nor the other witness mentioned

Patrick Carroll as participating in the discovery and recovery of his sister's body. At least three possibilities may account for the anomaly: first, Carroll's evidence was confused and less than easily intelligible; second, intentionally or unintentionally, what he said was wrongly transcribed; and, third, Patrick Carroll, allegedly feeble-minded, might have imagined what had happened. The apparent contradictions on this point, between Patrick Carroll's testimony and that of two other witnesses, at least introduces a question mark over the accuracy of the rest of his testimony, including the alleged interaction (during what was likely a traumatic moment) between Kate Carroll and her abductors. But even if Patrick Carroll's memory of the interchange between his sister and her captors was accurately recorded, it fails to identify, clearly or convincingly, an IRA motive for her execution. If Carroll was still distilling *poitín* it made unlikely the Dublin Castle and RIC claim, supported by McGarry, that she had complained to the authorities simply about 'illicit drink traffic'.¹¹⁶

The RIC and Dublin Castle assertion, based on a letter the IRA intercepted and presumably possessed, depicted Carroll as a concerned citizen who (it was suggested by part of the RIC report McGarry did not cite) was not currently a *poitín* distiller. Even assuming that Kate Carroll was engaged in dishonourable competition, as McGarry suggested, what favour would the RIC have required, in return for allowing her the unhampered pursuit of her illegal enterprise, if not the very kind of information that the IRA accused her of providing?¹¹⁷ If she was alternatively or also paying off borrowing on a fine, as the County Inspector stated, that too provided an RIC opportunity for exploitation of her vulnerable situation. Monaghan's IRA intelligence head, Dr Conn Ward, stated that Carroll was paid for her information (see page 12). McGarry's emphatic case is so weak it would be embarrassing if made by a first year undergraduate. It is certainly far less 'compelling' than his colleague at Queen's, Marie Coleman, claimed in 2015.

The British government refuses to identify its informers, even from the 19th century. Nevertheless, in 2016 historian Pádraig Ó Ruairc identified IRA victims for whose deaths or property losses, in return for their wartime services to Crown forces, the British government acknowledged responsibility to the Irish Compensation Committee, set up after hostilities ceased. As Ó Ruairc discovered, Kate Carroll is listed on the commission index as a 'British liability'. It seems unlikely that she earned that distinction for identifying *poitín* distillers.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Monaghan's War of Independence, 1919-21, in collaboration with Prof. Terence Dooley, Maynooth University, Monaghan County Museum, 2020, pp19-20. On the Irish Story website (28 September 2019), John Dorney included also Dolan's 2011 tweak, 'In Monaghan Kate Carroll [...] fell foul of the IRA, first when they fined her for illegal distilling and then, more fatally when they intercepted a letter she had sent to the police informing on other illicit alcohol producers. Talking to the police about non-IRA affairs was not usually fatal. She also, however, was rumoured to be "pestering" one of the local Volunteers to marry her after a short, secret affair', <https://www.theirishstory.com/2019/09/28/the-border-counties-in-the-irish-war-of-independence-1918-21/> (accessed 14 April 2020).

¹¹³ Though not mentioning Kate Carroll, Eunan O'Halpin noted the previously cited (note 82) link to Monaghan County Museum obtaining the Thomas Brennan papers, in his contribution to the Military Service (1916-23) Pensions Collection, *Brigade Activity Reports*, p31. That is the same publication in which McGarry noted the IRA killing of Carroll, though not the Brennan testimony contradicting his view of that event.

¹¹⁴ Dooley, *Irish Revolution 1912-23 Monaghan*, p91. *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 April, 7 May, 1921. 'Weak minded' and 'invalid' assertion also in *Northern Standard* of 22 April 1921.

¹¹⁵ Courts of Inquiry in lieu of Inquest – Civilians, Kate Carroll. Aughanameena, Co Monaghan, WO 35/147B/5, TNA. Reported with Court of Inquiry source not acknowledged, *Anglo Celt*, 23 April 1921: 'The body was found by her brother in a lane the following morning. He took the body home'.

¹¹⁶ *Dundalk Democrat*, 23 April 1921

¹¹⁷ A speculative point made by Lawlor, *Outrages*, see note 100.

¹¹⁸ Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, pp5, 117, 121. Ó Ruairc's research was published in January 2016. It was presented successfully for a doctorate in 2014 in the University of Limerick. Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, *The Anglo - Irish truce: an analysis of its immediate military impact, 8 - 11 July 1921*, <https://ulir.ul.ie/handle/10344/5397> (accessed, 15 July 2020). Fearghal McGarry was external examiner. On British government refusal to reveal informers' identity, see Barry Keane, *History Ireland*, v23, n3, May-June 2015. Carroll's mother and brother received £600 compensation in June 1921, *Anglo Celt*, 25 June 1921.

6 Conclusion

The evidence, properly scrutinised, shows that Kate Carroll is no longer Protestant, feeble-minded, spurned by a volunteer who dishonoured her, or a snit on her fellow moonshine makers. She was someone, possibly out of her depth, who became an informer, and who ignored warnings to desist. That does not mean that she should have been executed. But it is the reason she was executed.

Much of the evidence supporting this conclusion was available, yet ignored, when Dooley, McGarry, Dolan and Ferriter were writing. The most significant IRA testimony, from Thomas Brennan, was known to Professor Eunan O'Hallpin in 2006 but, for reasons outlined, appears to have remained unknown to others interested in the subject.

Those who promoted the story of Kate Carroll, Protestant poitín maker, preferred British to IRA accounts of Carroll's death. Ironically, in depicting her as a Protestant, whose death had a sectarian dimension, they went far beyond even the limits of contemporary British propaganda. Driven by ideological preconceptions, some historians introduced fabricated, misinterpreted or immaterial explanations. There is certainly no particular reason to privilege IRA testimony. But dismissing it, while endorsing tendentious British accounts appearing to be propaganda laced with verisimilitude, indicates a collective condition of selection bias.

Irish nationalists are often accused of having constructed an imagined Ireland. Evidence suggests that creating a distorted version of the past is also a feat of academic historiography. The example cited here, of an imaginary Protestant fate, intertwines historiography and mythology. It stems, in part, from adopting the dominant, 'establishment', view of the post-1968 Northern Ireland troubles and transposing it southwards and back in time. In 2013 the late Professor Ronan Fanning asserted that, [T]hroughout Northern Ireland's long war [1968-97] the British and Irish political establishments sought to control the presentation of the history of 1912-22 in order to buttress and legitimise their own authority while at the same time denying legitimacy and authority to the Provisional IRA and other paramilitary forces.¹¹⁹

Revisionist or conservative historians are custodians of a preferred, often falsified, narrative. Distorting republican opposition to British rule insulates the detail of Irish history in the post-long-war period from a broader public interest. History students are steered toward a view of the conflict remarkably similar to the official narrative Basil Clarke and his colleagues promoted in 1920.

During the 1970s guerrilla insurgency against minority white supremacy in Rhodesia, a two-part cartoon illustrated western media reactions to news of two massacres. In part-one a newsroom is thrown into a dizzying deadline frenzy when its wire service spat out news of the death of white-skinned civilians. In part-two a journalist becomes re-energised at incoming news of black victims of official white violence. Unimpressed semi-comatose colleagues lazily deflate him to the effect of, 'So what, dog bites man'.

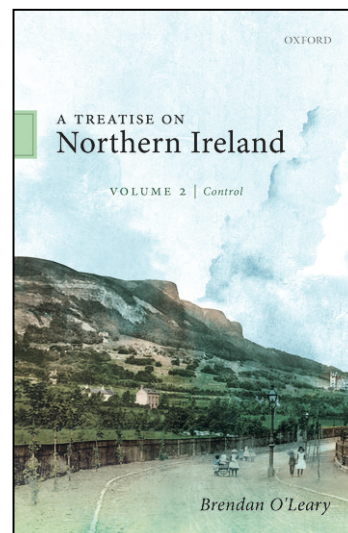
Dead white people had a higher news value by virtue of their skin complexion. Their lives mattered more.

For some Irish historians dead Irish Protestants, real or imagined, occupy a similar space. If the cartoon illustrates a type of racism, our story constitutes a species of sectarianism. That might seem an odd observation, especially considering that most of the historians critiqued here are mainly from a cultural Roman Catholic background. Another way to put it is that loyalists make for first-class victims. Detailing how many thousand nationalists were driven from their homes and livelihoods in Belfast and surrounding areas, tends to be, as in Gemma Clarke's work, a footnote.

In revisionist accounts, Irish republicans are transformed in the act of insurgency into an incipient and reactionary ruling class. Meanwhile, the real rulers and their agents are treated with academic kid gloves. Revisionist historians write then a meta history, abstracted from time, space, facts and context. This methodology is encouraged because of conservative fears that historical accounts may stimulate politics and therefore ultimately history itself.

Fearghal McGarry was therefore mistaken in asserting that, 'The end of the [1968-97] Troubles saw much heat dissipate from these [Irish history] disputes'. In fact, 'the end' is precisely when their contemporary aspect emerged, as controversial accounts of the 1919-21 conflict in Cork, and the Monaghan-based research discussed here, fully demonstrate. Rather astonishingly, McGarry also dismissed the revisionism debate as having little to do with 'genuine disagreements over evidence, methods or interpretation'. Citing Stephen Howe, he viewed it as a 'metaphor for wider disputes over Irish national history and identity'.¹²⁰ In McGarry's view, it seems, errors of fact in revisionist accounts, reinforcing errors of interpretation, may be complacently ignored. Those seeking objective understanding must select their history elsewhere.

Revisionist history needs to be read, but treated in the same manner as historians should treat their sources, critically. Revisionist historians retaining a critical faculty need to break out of a self-reinforcing and self-referential cocoon.



Brendan O'Leary, three-volume analysis of emergence and eventual political containment of Northern Ireland territory

¹¹⁹ Ronan Fanning, *Fatal Path British government and Irish revolution 1910-1922*, Faber, 2013, p5.

¹²⁰ Fearghal McGarry, introduction to 'Revolution, 1916-1923', Chapter 9, *Cambridge History of Ireland*, Volume 4, CUP, 2018, p260.

'SHE IS A PROTESTANT AS WELL'

A CONTRIBUTION TO FÉILE AN PHOBAIL 2020

During the 1990s Irish historiography, in its 'revisionist' variant, made a startling discovery: the IRA systematically persecuted Protestants during the 1919-22 Irish War of Independence.

Because not previously a feature of historical writing, the 'persecuted-Protestant' field was portrayed as something not only new but previously hidden by 'Catholic-nationalists'. The very fact of its emergence, into the light of academic consideration, demonstrated to polite society that, as TCD's Anne Dolan put it, 'fester[ing] under the quite sanitised surface of Irish nationalism' were what 'may have been little more than a sequence of dirty deeds'.

Ireland had been seen as a country subject to British sectarian, colonial and imperialist aggression, a rulership that included war, dispossession, and famine. Then, in 1919-22, the victims were victorious. Mainly Roman Catholic Irish nationalists and republicans, despite espousing anti-sectarian sentiments, allegedly turned the tables on their now defenceless erstwhile Protestant overlords. The latter, in the guise of innocent Protestant civilians, were subjected in their homes, farmsteads and businesses to, as the late Peter Hart put it in 1996, 'what might be termed "ethnic cleansing"'. This effort was concentrated, he said, in south Leinster and Munster, most particularly in Cork.

Hart's multi-sourced and nuanced analysis was praised, almost universally. Roy Foster and Baron [formerly merely Paul] Bew of Donigore heralded Hart as the foremost historian of the 'Irish Revolution'. Journalists Kevin Myers and Eoghan Harris were newspaper champions.

Historians from outside the academic bubble picked some holes. Why did Hart omit from his analysis clear evidence that some Protestants, said by Hart to be innocent IRA victims, were loyalist participants in the conflict? How did he manage to interview an anonymous elderly participant in the November 1920 Kilmichael ambush six days after the last participant died in November 1989? Some historians inside the bubble began questioning too. His figures on southern Protestant population decline were not simply wrong; he made them up. The boy genius's reputation became somewhat tarnished, despite valiant attempts to resuscitate it and to undermine his critics as cranks.

Young historians were meanwhile encouraged to search out examples of sectarianism in what was to become in 1922 the 26-County Irish Free State. Looking within the confines of the new Six-County Northern Irish territory, made up of six of Ulster's nine counties, was discouraged. Its birth pangs were bathed in the blood of 455 people, after thousands of Catholics (and 'rotten prods', socialists and trade unionists, who supported them) were expelled from their jobs, homes and businesses in 1920-22. Most of the victims were Catholics whose fate would, if included, upset new research parameters.

Instead, historians mined an apparently rich seam of

sectarianism in Monaghan: an Ulster county left out of Northern Ireland because, like Donegal and Cavan, it contained too many Catholics for unionists to successfully subdue. The sectarianism historians were interested in, though, was of the republican variety.

A woman called Kate Carroll was fore-grounded, one of three women executed by the IRA between 1919-21, from a currently estimated total of 196. Her end constituted enough of an exception from which historians could generalise. This putative sectarian victim was presented as a poor Protestant poitin distiller. Terence Dooley of NUI Maynooth said (four times) that the IRA targeted her in a 'callous' act of sectarian 'revenge', as a result of imagined 'ancestral grievances' and also (later) 'jealousies'. The charge of spying against her was, said Fearghal McGarry of QUB, 'a convenient rationale for the execution of an obvious and antisocial security risk': a 'middle aged Protestant spinster' of 'no social consequence'. UCD's Diarmaid Ferriter thought she might have been killed because she 'had amorous intent towards an [unappreciative] IRA man', an assertion Anne Dolan originated and Fearghal McGarry repeated. The different, sometimes overlapping and contradictory arguments, are paraphrased on the cover.

This essay by Dr Niall Meehan examines historians' claims. He demonstrates that their dissection of the sad fate of Kate Carroll is wanting in every respect, not least in the fictitious origin of the sectarianism argument. He presents here for the first time a detailed explanation of why the IRA executed Kate Carroll in April 1921.

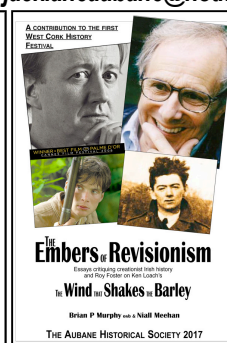
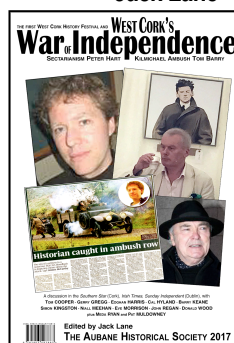
Dr Meehan explains how Irish revisionist historiography has produced a fantasy version of Irish history. He contrasts the imaginary sectarianism concocted in the case of Kate Carroll with the comparatively ignored real thing on the streets of Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland.

This essay should be read by all interested in how history is written, as distinct from made.

Irish history students could consider it as their professors explain what transpired when historians happened upon the death of Kate Carroll. It might become a case study of, 'how not to write history'.

The essay accompanies a talk at Féile an Phobail in Belfast on 8 August 2020, recording available online.

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*'He who cannot call
on three thousand
years is living from
hand to mouth'*
- Goethe