



## Years of turbulence: the Irish revolution and its aftermath in honour of Michael Laffan

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To cite this article: Richard Parfitt (2017) Years of turbulence: the Irish revolution and its aftermath in honour of Michael Laffan, *Irish Studies Review*, 25:1, 126-127, DOI: [10.1080/09670882.2016.1262235](https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2016.1262235)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2016.1262235>



Published online: 21 Nov 2016.



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now commemorate its other aspects, such as Parnell's relatively comfortable incarceration, but the gaol and the story of the Easter 1916 leaders are inextricably linked in the public consciousness, as evidenced in the gaol's role in the ceremonies and TV concerts in the 1916 centenary commemorations. Cooke references how the curators attempted to engage with, and to an extent dispel, the myths around 1916; using "more not less aesthetics" such as visual art exhibitions and staging Beckett's play, *Catastrophe*, to "interrogate and explore" (214) Kilmainham's difficult history.

This volume excels at filling the gap in the literature surrounding material culture of the Rising. Perhaps in later editions there is scope for a new chapter considering how the materiality of 1916 has been represented at its centenary. At 2016 commemoration events in Dublin, lucrative street stalls proliferated, selling unofficial merchandise: tea-towels with images of the Rising leaders; pre-tricolour Republic flags with "original" typography; 1916-era wooden telephone boxes, and GAA jerseys with the proclamation stitched into the fabric of the jersey. A bar in Waterford also had a cocktail list printed on the front of the Proclamation. The Proclamation's image being recognisable, and so reproducible, meant that it remains famous and iconic, but, like Warhol's Monroe prints, it was also easily copied, and can now be turned into anything the vendor wants. Its representation of a socialist Ireland has become a profit-making machine; the image has become more real than the reality.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2016.1266734>

**Years of turbulence: the Irish revolution and its aftermath in honour of Michael Laffan**, edited by Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan, Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2015, 302 pp., €40.00 (hardback), ISBN 9781910820070

The 14 chapters that make up *Years of Turbulence*, edited by Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan, provide a fitting tribute to the career of Professor Michael Laffan. The essays primarily concern the period with which Laffan is most closely associated, the Irish revolution of c. 1916–1923. As the editors acknowledge, such a collection could not provide a "comprehensive treatment of the Irish revolution or any aspect of it". It does, however, successfully highlight "some of the themes and approaches currently engaging historians of the period" (2). While *Years of Turbulence* does not fundamentally alter our knowledge of a revolution on which so much has been written, it does provide stimulating case studies that enhance our understanding and suggest fruitful new approaches and perspectives.

The two introductory essays, the first by the editors and the second by Eamon O'Flaherty, place Laffan's work and career in historiographical context. They also praise his passion for teaching and public outreach. Ferriter and Riordan identify the range of source material that has become available to historians over the course of Laffan's career, including census records, the Bureau of Military History and The Military Service Pension Records. The latter is explored in greater depth in Ferriter's own chapter on the value of the applications as a source for social histories of the period in which pensions were claimed. O'Flaherty develops these themes further, tracing Laffan's early career and influences, locating him within the increasing professionalisation of Irish history. Laffan himself, O'Flaherty notes, refuted the claim that revisionism was a response to the Northern Troubles that offered a "comfort to Margaret Thatcher" (16). While some, specifically Conor Cruise O'Brien, reinforced this image by becoming more explicitly unionist, Laffan

maintained that the opening of new archival sources was more important than the Northern Irish Troubles. As O'Flaherty points out, the donation of Laffan's diaries to the University College Dublin archives will provide a valuable new source for further study of revisionism and of UCD as a research environment.

Highlights in his volume include Conor Mulvagh's essay on the Irish Parliamentary Party after the Easter Rising. Mulvagh draws attention to the importance of the physical distance between the party leaders, particularly John Dillon who was in Dublin and John Redmond in Westminster. Dillon's position meant that he was more in touch with the public mood during and after the Rising, but his distance from Redmond meant that the latter provided the party's official response, a hasty and ill-considered condemnation. The contributions are at their strongest where they move beyond specifically political history. William Murphy, for instance, analyses the responses of women to the 1911 census. Murphy assesses the impact of calls from suffrage campaigners for women to boycott the census, but also notes numerous other means by which women were able to register their dissent. Paul Rouse and Ross O'Carroll consider the professionalisation of the Gaelic Athletic Association, taking the 1915 hurling final and the unlikely victory of Leix as a case study. Marie Coleman tackles the subject of violence against women during the War of Independence. The strength of her analysis is in considering various categories of violence and abuse, including the physical, psychological, gendered and overtly sexual. Her discussion also covers the often asked but never definitively answered question of why there are so few accounts of rape and sexual violence from the conflict. Her explanations are necessarily speculative, but thought-provoking for further study. Coleman suggests that the battle for international recognition, the importance of women in the republican movement and the lack of contact between women and combatants may all have contributed to its scarcity. Anne Dolan's contribution on the manner in which informers were killed provides a unique approach that strikes one as immediately applicable elsewhere. Dolan recognises that these executions were unusually intimate in their nature. As such, she analyses the bodies as a form of visual culture. In such circumstances, the placing of bullet holes was a deliberate expression of what the killers hoped to achieve, namely terror.

Elsewhere, the volume provides interesting case studies and biographies. Brian Mayo details Michael Keogh's role in Roger Casement's Brigade of Irish Prisoners of War. Shaun Gilligan explores various biographical representations of Padraic Pearse. Katie Lingard details the role of the IRA General Headquarters in setting limits on Republican violence during the War of Independence. Una Newell analyses the political fallout of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in County Galway. Finally, two biographical chapters on Bulmer Hobson's economic writings as a post-independence civil servant by Marnie Hay and on the influences of Seán Lemass by Tom Garvin conclude the collection.

*Years of Turbulence* would have benefited from a more thematic arrangement of chapters, rather than the largely chronological approach preferred. More material like that of Eamon O'Flaherty on Professor Laffan's career and historiographical importance may also have enhanced its contribution. There was perhaps room for engagement with more themes and historiographical developments such as comparative history or interdisciplinary approaches. Nevertheless, there is much to be found in this volume that provides interesting interpretations and stimulating material. The essays on the Military Service Pension Records, the GAA, Parliamentary Party responses to 1916, violence against women, responses to the 1911 census and the killing of informers provide particularly engaging interpretations of their given topics that might be employed for teaching purposes.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2016.1262235>