

The book history of Rona M. Fields's *A Society on the Run* (1973): A case study in the alleged suppression of psychological research on Northern Ireland

Gavin Miller 

Department of English Literature, School of Critical Studies, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

Correspondence

Gavin Miller.

Email: gavin.miller@glasgow.ac.uk

Funding information

British Academy

Abstract

The US psychologist Rona M. Field's book *A Society on the Run* (1973) offered a psychological account of the nature and effects of the Northern Irish Troubles at their peak in the early 1970s. The book was withdrawn shortly after publication by its publisher, Penguin Books Limited, and never reissued. Fields alleged publicly that the book had been suppressed by the British state, a claim that has often been treated uncritically. Local Northern Irish psychologists suggested that the book was taken off the market because of its scientific deficiencies. Rigorous book-historical investigation using Penguin editorial fields reveals, however, that what might appear to be a case of state suppression, or an instance of disciplinary boundary work, can be explained instead by the commercial interests and professional standards of a publisher keen to preserve its reputation for quality and reliability.

KEYWORDS

book history, censorship, Northern Ireland, Penguin Books, psychology, Rona M. Fields

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2023 The Authors. *Journal of The History of the Behavioral Sciences* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC.

1 | INTRODUCTION

While history of the psychological disciplines habitually employs archival investigation of unpublished clinical and personal papers, there has been surprisingly little use of book history as a methodology, especially in comparison to the research base in broadcasting history (e.g., Long, 2014; Miller, 2017; Snelson, 2021) and academic publishing (e.g., Harris, 2020). Book history, though, has a particular and valuable role to play. It offers insight into the circulation of psychological knowledge with respect to the commercial imperatives of the book industry, demands which are intensified particularly in mass-market publishing. Complementing work on popular post-war publishing on psychiatry in Britain (Miller, 2015), this article pursues a book-historical case study in the alleged suppression of psychological knowledge of the Northern Irish troubles. It uses editorial files to find out how and why the respected British publisher Penguin Books Limited withdrew from sale Rona M. Fields's *A Society on the Run: a Psychology of Northern Ireland* (1973). The answer to these questions shows the significance of book history to the history of the human sciences: what might appear to be a case of state suppression or an instance of disciplinary "boundary work" (Gieryn, 1983), can be explained instead by the commercial interests and professional standards of a publisher keen to preserve its reputation for quality and reliability.

Rona M. Fields (1932–2016) was a US psychologist whose career stretched from the mid-1960s to the 2000s. Although she began her working life as an academic, she was denied tenure at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, and subsequently worked in various clinical, academic, and consulting roles. She was concerned particularly with the psychological causes, nature, and effects of terrorism, and was a frequent media commentator on the topic. Shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, for instance, she was cited in *The Washington Post*, which sought her advice on how to cope with the "psychological aftermath of a terrorist attack" (Morse, 2001). The *Post* identifies Fields as a consultant to an American Psychological Association online guide on "Coping with Terrorism"—which is extensively cited in the article—and she is described as a "clinical psychologist" who "has spent 30 years studying terrorism and its effects in places including Northern Ireland and the Middle East." Fields had been a regular psychology authority for the *Post* since at least 1980, and had commented on issues such as the psychological harm done to Middle Eastern hostages (McCarthy, 1980) and the psychological effects on children of the 1999 mass murder at Columbine High School (Samuels, 1999).

Fields developed a reputation for expertise on terrorism partly because of her research in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s, a period when the conflict had been intensified by the inflammatory program of mass internment launched in August 1971 (see, e.g., McCleery, 2015), and by subsequent catastrophes, most notoriously the killing of unarmed civilians by the British Army in Bloody Sunday of January 1972 (see, e.g., Hayes & Campbell, 2005). The fruits of Fields's research fieldwork in Northern Ireland were issued by the leading UK publisher Penguin as an original title, as opposed to Penguin's primary output of paperbacks taken over from hardback editions issued by other publishers. Her Penguin Education title, *A Society on the Run: A Psychology of Northern Ireland* (Fields, 1973a), entered the market in October 1973, but was withdrawn shortly thereafter by the publishers following a scathing review in *The Sunday Times* (Whale, 1973). The publishing agreement between Fields and Penguin eventually dissolved, and her text was published in 1977 in an expanded and revised form in the US by Temple University Press as *Society under Siege: A Psychology of Northern Ireland* (Fields, 1977).

The withdrawal of *A Society on the Run* (hereafter, *Society*) was an important moment in Fields's professional biography. Fields energetically promoted a narrative of British state intervention in the publishing process. Although her account was disputed in the press at the time, it is often treated as reliable when reported in later sources. A 1977 Irish newspaper article on Fields, for instance, states that Penguin "withdrew the book from publication after 15,000 copies were issued and shredded a further 10,000 to make sure that the work did not reach the bookshelves of England [*sic*]" (Reid, 1977). The story has also been repeated more or less as truth in academic literature: "One book, Rona Fields's *A Society on the Run* (1973) was, after governmental pressure, ordered through the shredding machine—although there was widespread concern and protest, not just official about the book's accuracy" (Taylor, 1988, p. 130). The same source cites Fields's claim that "some communication from the Director

of Community Relations in the North was passed on to my publishers, Penguin, in which a request was made not to publish any book by me” (Taylor, 1988, p. 130). David Miller also treats Field's claim of censorship as unproblematic, stating that *Society* “was first censored and then withdrawn and 10,000 copies pulped as a result of what Fields called ‘a massive effort on the part of the governments involved to suppress my findings’” (Miller, 2014, p. 35). In Fields's later *Society under Siege*, the narrative of state oppression is offered both as fact and as evidence of incendiary truth contained in her analysis: “every time I have completed one or another part of my research and articulated my findings there has been such a massive effort on the part of the governments involved to suppress them, even to the extent of shredding ten thousand copies of a two-hundred-page book (*A Society On The Run*—my report on two years of research findings)” (Fields, 1977, p. xi).

This article assesses Fields's claim that Penguin withdrew *Society* in obedience to political pressure from the British government. It uses evidence from Penguin editorial files to understand the publishing decisions that led to the withdrawal of *Society* from the book market and to the eventual dissolution of Fields's contract. The analysis is contextualized within a discussion of rhetoric about who in the psychological disciplines had authority over the Troubles: was it the impassioned visiting researcher from outside the territory, or the supposedly neutral psychological researcher from within? Such spatial rhetoric expressed a fundamental epistemic tension. Outsiders such as Fields were often committed to a tradition of North American action research that used empathetic relationships to get inside the world of community research participants and that refused to isolate knowing from emancipatory political action. Insiders, typically from Northern Ireland's more liberal academic community, operated a more quantitative and positivist research paradigm that supposed the ideal researcher to be a neutral party outside of the territory's divided communities. Both outsiders and insiders offered the withdrawal of *Society* as evidence of their epistemic advantage over the other. To outsiders, withdrawal showed that the book as social action spoke truth to the power of the oppressive British state. To insiders, withdrawal demonstrated that the book was the psychologically or scientifically worthless production of an academic “tourist.” Book history will here be used to show which side—if any—was correct in its interpretation of events.

2 | PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERTISE AND THE TROUBLES: INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

Fields was one of various researchers—local, British, and international—for whom the Northern Irish Troubles were an opportunity for the psychological and human sciences. Ian Miller situates Fields as pre-eminent in an early generation of psychological researchers who were comparatively autonomous of Northern Irish power structures since they “had no direct connections to the state through university employment, research funding or policymaking contributions” (Miller, 2021, p. 453). Researchers such as Fields, H. Alex Lyons, and Morris Fraser, presented evidence of Troubles-related psychological and psychosomatic distress, particularly among children (Miller, 2021, pp. 440–441). Ignatius J. Toner observes that “[t]he pessimistic impressions of Belfast psychiatrists, visitors from the United States, and Scottish and English psychologists dominated the first decade of the 20-year-old conflict” (Toner, 1994, p. 636). Nonetheless, the psychological effects upon children were, and remained for some time, a contentious issue, with a contrary view later emerging from local academic researchers.

Northern Ireland's two universities—the older Queens University Belfast and the new University of Ulster—presented themselves internally and externally as “liberal institutions in a divided and troubled society” (Osborne & Cormack, 1990, p. 339), although their supposed political neutrality and equal accessibility was belied by religious disparities in employment that favored the Protestant population, and by the minimal commitment to the implementation of fair employment legislation (Osborne & Cormack, 1990, pp. 330–339). In the 1980s, and following a 1978 conference led by the local branch of the British Psychological Society, developmental psychologists within Northern Ireland offered their response to the “outside” view. Drawing on their position of proximity and supposed liberal neutrality, they claimed to offer a “view from the ‘inside’” that was “in some ways,

more optimistic than the view from the 'outside'" (Toner, 1994, p. 636). These psychologists argued that violence was less prominent in children's lives than might be supposed, and that local social and economic deprivation was far more causally significant upon child development (Toner, 1994, pp. 634–635). While it might be tempting to impose a gendered schema on the contrast between Fields's feminist psychology and the views of her detractors, some of her most trenchant critics were female (just as some of her supporters, such as Edward Opton [below], were male). Liz McWhirter, a psychological researcher from Queens University Belfast offered a spatial rhetoric in her rebuttal of Fields's methods and results. According to "'outside' observers," Northern Irish "conflict and violence must have produced severely damaging long-term effects on the people of the region" (McWhirter, 1983, p. 154). Whereas, according to "'inside' researchers" (notably "researchers" rather than "observers"), "the people of Northern Ireland, especially the children who have grown up with the violence at least as a backcloth to their lives, are resilient, adaptable and have coped surprisingly well with Northern Ireland's troubles" (McWhirter, 1983, p. 154).

Methodological differences allowed local academic psychologists such as McWhirter to present Fields's work as nonscientific, or as only marginally so. McWhirter identifies Fields—"an American psychoanalytic psychologist-cum[-]sociologist"—as typical of "visiting foreign researchers" (McWhirter, 1983, p. 153). As Ian Miller explains, Fields's activist, community-based research meant that she "relied extensively upon qualitative evidence and case studies" rather than using the statistical approaches favored by her intellectual opponents (Miller, 2021, p. 443). McWhirter's boundary work complements the spatializing rhetoric offered by Fields and readily apparent in *Society*. While Fields nominally affords herself the status of "an outsider," her position as a foreign national allows her to get truly inside the territory: she is "able to straddle many of the otherwise rigid and insurmountable fences between segments of the population" (Fields, 1973a, p. 25). She can enter more readily into the domestic spaces of different communities and classes in order "to gain the kind of perspective which allows the social scientist to understand the view from within" (Fields, 1973a, p. 26). Elaborating this poetics of passing through boundaries, Fields claims to have been allowed into "the homes and guts" of population, who trusted that "I'd be fair and understanding" (Fields, 1973a, p. 26). The best insider for Northern Ireland, according to Fields, is an impassioned but impartial outsider. Her preface to *Society* concludes with a list of typified locals, including "people who offered me a place in a bed in their tiny crowded homes," "children who eagerly lined up for the dull business of psychological testing," "sad-eyed men who stumbled out of internment camps," "youth workers and community relations people who [...] believe that somehow human energy and goodwill can rectify the sins of the past generations," and "young men and women who believe that there is no justice out there for them, but trusted me to deal justly with them" (Fields, 1973a, p. 10). She concludes "to all of these people I am indebted and grateful. They are the 'ordinary people' of which I am one" (Fields, 1973a, p. 10).

Although the withdrawal of *Society* was enormously vexatious to Fields, it was, in her view, further proof of her affinity with the "ordinary people" of Northern Ireland. She, like them, was being oppressed by the British State. Fields' interpretation of events can be persuasive. When recounting the events surrounding *Society's* publication, Miller takes care initially to present them in terms of competing testimony:

the book was swiftly withdrawn by its publishers, Penguin, after just one week. Penguin claimed to have taken this action after spotting numerous typographical errors. Fields alleged that her book had been withdrawn under political pressure and that David Rowlands, Director of the Community Relations Office in Northern Ireland, had informed the publishers that her work might harm community relations. Rowlands had admitted that he had approached Penguin but denied having censored the book. (Miller, 2021, p. 444).

However, Miller later presents the withdrawal of *Society* in support of his thesis that republican perspectives and indeed analyses critical of the military intervention were constrained by the Northern Irish state, which was "under pressure to protect and promote its legitimacy" (Miller, 2021, p. 453): "If we remind ourselves that Field's

A Society on the Run was withdrawn (and allegedly shredded) following intervention from government bodies, it is not too implausible to consider the state's relationship with research in this way" (Miller, 2021, p. 455).

In one interpretation, the fate of *Society* shows that Fields was the real insider, rather than the local psychological professions, who were epistemically compromised by their proximity to and dependence upon the Northern Irish (and British) state. Yet, the withdrawal of *Society* has also been interpreted to show the opposite—that Fields was a nonscientific outsider to both the territory and psychology. A recent chronology produced by the Northern Ireland Branch of the British Psychological Society states that *Society* was withdrawn "following controversy about the adequacy of the research methods and conclusions" (McGuinness, 2016). This view was also presented in later coverage of debates between Fields and the psychological professions in Northern Ireland: a 1982 article in the *Belfast Telegraph* says that *Society* "was withdrawn after protests from Belfast psychologists about its non-scientific approach" (White, 1982). Both interpretations presume that the withdrawal of *Society* had something to do with this dispute. But what does book history tell us?

3 | PUBLISHING WITH PENGUIN EDUCATION

Society was published by one of the largest and most significant of 20th-century British publishing houses. Penguin Books, established in 1935, was a trusted national institution. The mainstay of its list was for decades the so-called "takeover"—an inexpensive Penguin paperback edition of a title that had been previously issued in hardback (usually, but not always, by another publisher). Penguin had an extensive nonfiction list that included an eclectic range of titles from the human and psychological sciences. Many of these were issued through its nonfiction imprint Pelican, established in 1937, and continuing until 1984 (Baines, 2005, p. 166; Joicey, 1993, p. 29). Pelicans were intended as "a definitive library of modern knowledge" (Joicey, 1993, p. 54), and offered a mixture of both takeovers and originals. Penguin also offered a highly successful series of Penguin Specials, which began in 1937 in order "to provide a topical commentary on international and domestic events" (Joicey, 1993, p. 31), and which continued until 1988 (Blackburn, 2020, p. 2). Penguin Education was a new imprint, running from 1965 to 1974 (The West Drayton Collective, 2017, p. 9), and specializing in titles for primary, secondary, and higher education. It appeared during a period when "Penguin's progressive publishing became a source of political consternation" in which "[t]hose on the left defended its egalitarian agenda, while many Conservatives came to regard the publisher as a sponsor of leftist propaganda" (Blackburn, 2020, p. 199). Penguin Education's "principal function was to provide textbooks for schools and universities, but it also published a series of Education Specials that contributed to political debates about educational issues" (Blackburn, 2020, pp. 191–192). These polemical books addressed hot topics in progressive education. Some Education Specials were takeovers of other editions, such as Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society* (Illich, 1973) and Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972) (The West Drayton Collective, 2017, p. 40). Education Specials were also commissioned as originals, some at amazing speed. *Warwick University Ltd* (Thompson, 1970) responded to the furor that arose when student protestors uncovered evidence that the University of Warwick was engaged in "secret political surveillance of both staff and students" (The West Drayton Collective, 2017, p. 44). The 60,000-word book was collaboratively authored, copy-edited, checked by lawyers, printed, and delivered to bookshops in 6 weeks (The West Drayton Collective, 2017, p. 43). Fields's *Society* was not an Education Special, but rather a title in Penguin Education's Psychology list. Nonetheless, it was clearly commissioned as part of Penguin Education's commitment to progressive discussion of controversial issues in a timely manner.

Far from being aligned ideologically with the British state, Penguin Education was temperamentally sympathetic to Fields's book. Their alliance with their author is indicated in the correspondence initiated by David Rowlands, the Director of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission, when he attempted to intervene in the publication of *Society* in July 1973. Rowlands was the Director of an organization that was increasingly irrelevant before the growing violence of the Troubles. The Community Relations Commission was an

initiative, formed on analogy to the British Race Relations Board, that endured from 1969 to 1975 and which deliberately eschewed the Unionist domination of civic and political life. The Commission, whose membership was roughly equal between Protestant and Catholic communities, sought to promote “harmonious community relations” by developing community organizations that could “unite across the sectarian barriers” (Frazer & Fitzduff, 1994, p. 4). But by 1973, the Commission was a beleaguered organization. Both its Director, Hywel Griffiths, and its Chairman, Maurice Hayes, had resigned in 1972. Hayes, who was a Catholic, left in response to the twin blows of internment and Bloody Sunday, which he felt made the Commission's work futile. As he put it in a later oral history interview, “the government that we were working for were shooting at citizens, they were having them locked up first, and now they were shooting them in the street” (Etchart, 2021, p. 67).

Rowlands's letter regarding Fields's research was addressed to Penguin's managing editor, and it was forwarded internally to Penguin Education for a reply. In his letter (Letter: Rowlands, Managing Editor, 10 July 1973), Rowlands speaks of “considerable misgivings” about Fields's forthcoming book, and he refers to “various public pronouncements and the wild and inaccurate statements made in articles written by Dr. Fields.” He claims that Fields has “caused great offence to many dedicated people in this province” and that consequently “one professional association has issued a writ against her for libel.” He concludes:

If it were to follow the pattern of her previous articles the publication of a book by Dr. Fields could do enormous damage to Community Relations in Northern Ireland. On the other hand the Commission would wish to recognise your right to publish what you think fit. May I suggest, if it can be of any help in the situation, that I would be pleased to arrange for a fair and unbiased assessment of Dr. Fields' manuscript for its accuracy and balance.

The response from Martin Lightfoot, Managing Director of Penguin Education, defends their author, “a reputable and highly qualified academic psychologist,” and makes no commitment to allow Rowlands access to the book (Letter: Lightfoot, Rowlands, July 27, 1973). Lightfoot points out that he is not “responsible for statements made by Dr Fields to the press, still less for the accuracy with which she has been reported”; he can “only answer for the book which we intend to publish,” one which “has, of course, been read by our libel lawyers.” As for community relations, Lightfoot “would tend to take the view that scrupulous attempts to describe the truth of any situation would not in the long run act against the interests of the people concerned.” He ends with a polite rebuff to Rowlands's attempt to insert himself as a peer reviewer: “If you could elaborate somewhat on your letter I should be in a better position to decide whether or not there might be some point in letting you see a proof copy of the book.” Lightfoot's letter had its likely intended effect. Rowlands responds by withdrawing his request (Letter: Rowlands, Lightfoot, August 16, 1973). He explains that, after due consideration,

I think that we should not be involved in any way in putting forward detailed arguments or making a case in request of Dr. Fields' forthcoming book. You are a responsible and highly respected firm of publishers and I know that you take every care to check the correctness and authenticity of what you publish and I feel that the Commission ought to leave it to your judgement.

Rowlands “would not want to give the impression that I or the Commission were engaging in any form of campaign or vendetta against Dr. Fields.”

The exchange between Rowlands and Lightfoot indicates an editor acting in the interests of his author and publishing house, while taking care to see if there is any substantial allegation underlying Rowlands's letter. The correspondence arose, however, in a context that intensified Fields's anxieties. *Society* had already been edited quite heavily by Jonathan Croall, commissioning editor for Psychology. In around June 1973, Croall had “edited the second draft heavily” and “dropped two chapters” (Memo: [Croall], Lightfoot, June 27, 1973). He was also of the view that the book could be improved: Fields has been “reasonably successful in welding together a rather disparate

set of essays, though if there had been another three months even this might have been improved on." Fields tends to "overwrite" and to "unnecessary abstraction" in her sociological reference points. However, "What her work lacks in precision it makes up for in width of outlook, passionate commitment, and a sense of the political uses and abuses of social sciences"; while the book is "an odd mixture of hard and soft data," this is because the author is "a clinical psychologist, therapist, social psychologist, feminist and political activist all at the same time."

As Penguin was aware from its clippings agency, Fields had also stirred up a hornet's nest in a February 1973 interview with the *Times Educational Supplement* in which she discussed play centers that she had opened for children in Belfast and Derry (Press clippings, c.9 February 1973). The article quoted her (accurately or not) as making two particularly contentious statements. First, that "[t]he children are forever on the streets because there is nowhere else for them to go. Houses are overcrowded. The youth clubs are closed," followed by what appears to be journalist's paraphrase, "Even when they [i.e. youth clubs] are open they are authoritarian, just like the schools." Second, "If a doctor or nurse is Protestant and they find out that the child in front of them is Catholic they just lose interest. The child's school and address automatically betray his religion." The ensuing response in the *TES* letters page was hostile. Youth club leaders thought that Fields was ignoring and belittling their work. Rowlands was displeased by the Fields's apparent claim that "Protestant doctors and nurses take no interest in sick Catholic children." He declares:

Religious discrimination in this Province has, over the years, taken some strange forms, but never in all our experience has it been manifest in the treatment of the sick and injured of whatever age. If Dr Fields has evidence to support her allegations this Commission will be pleased to investigate them. If there is no evidence, then in fairness to the medical staff of our hospitals these allegations should be withdrawn.

Fields's reply (in which she implies that she was misreported) acknowledges the activities of other play centers and youth clubs. She does not return to her claim about direct clinical discrimination, however, and instead points out discriminatory employment and management practices within the health service in Northern Ireland—a practice which, she argues, "ensures that working-class and minority populations will be physically disadvantaged and alienated."

Fields' feeling of persecution was almost certainly consolidated by a suspicious coincidence of dates. Rowlands's letter of July 10, 1973, coincided with a fishing investigation by some arm of the Northern Irish or British state. On July 10, 1973, Fields attended Crumlin Road Jail, Belfast, at the request of a lawyer who wanted her to assess one of his clients. In a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs written the following day (Letter: Fields, Wilson, July 11, 1973), Fields describes her mistreatment during this prearranged and approved visit. After "an intensive search" by two female attendants—an experience she found "humiliating"—she is held incommunicado for 4 h, and her visit finally canceled. Moreover, the attendants use their search as an excuse to gather intelligence on Fields, and through her, on her contacts and clients:

They insisted on reading personal letters, business cards of acquaintances, test protocols and clinical interview material from previous clients, my private telephone directories, notes, and finally, examining my clinical test materials—these are highly confidential materials. They took into their keeping, several papers (including my tourist guide of Ulster, a newspaper, a note), my tape recorder, separate completed tapes of confidential interviews with clients, etc.

Rowlands' letter, therefore, coincided exactly with what was likely preplanned harassment and investigation of Fields under the guise of security protocols.

Moreover, Rowlands's intervention led to the redaction of the copy text for *Society*, even if it not by his hand. While Rowlands was refused access to the proofs of *Society on the Run*, his letter prompted further internal scrutiny

of the text. In a lengthy memo in August 1973 (Memo: Calvocoressi, Lightfoot/Croall, August 7, 1973), a further review was offered by Peter Calvocoressi, Chief Executive of Penguin. Calvocoressi has been asked “to read these galleys because of the allegation that the publication of the book would damage community relations in Northern Ireland,” specifically because of “manifest bias and unfairness against one of the two religious communities (in fact, against the Protestants).” He concludes: “I have found no such bias. There may be sentences or paragraphs which could be more safely phrased, but in general, I have not found this to be a pro-Catholic or anti-Protestant book.” Much of the book “contains a great deal of very interesting stuff” and is “far from being a threat to community relations.” Calvocoressi did though have considerable reservations regarding the first two chapters of the book, which he considered “so distorted that they should not be published by us without considerable revision.” His central objection is that “[t]he author clearly assumes and conveys that much of the evil that has happened in Northern Ireland derives from a vicious premeditated policy of the British authorities”—this policy being one of “what she calls cultural genocide.” Calvocoressi in his remaining comments draws attention to circular reasoning, prejudicial vocabulary, and the fallacy of “implying and imputing design as a result of studying effects.”

Comparison of Calvocoressi’s brief citations with the published text of *Society* shows that some of this opening material was changed or removed. Textual correspondences from the Calvocoressi review (such as the vocabulary of “experiment” and “experimenters” and references to internment), show that Fields was re-using material from an earlier 1973 article “Ulster: A Psychological Experiment?” published in an issue of the *New Humanist* that focused on Irish affairs, particularly Northern Ireland. Although the title is framed as question, the article is rarely tentative. Fields contends that the situation in Northern Ireland is not “the coincidental convergence of many variables” but rather an “in situ experiment” to develop “a new model for genocide,” which the British are applying as a kind of Final Solution “to the perennial British problem known as the Irish Question” (Fields, 1973b, p. 446). For Fields, genocide extends beyond the mass murder of a people:

The intent of any programme of genocide is to eliminate the unique characteristics of a population group. It is not considered sufficient to eradicate only a particular religious practice or a particular family line. As demonstrated in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, the goal of such a programme is to obtain homogeneity through eliminating any indices of differential cultural identity. (Fields, 1973b, p. 446)

As evidence for this claim, Field refers to the policy of internment launched by the British Army, with Northern Irish and British state approval, on August 9, 1971 (and which continued until December 1975). This inflammatory policy overwhelmingly targeted the Catholic, Irish nationalist, and republican population, and served only to intensify sectarian violence, as well as hostility to British Army (McCleery, 2015, pp. 14–52). The use of psychological and physical torture and coercion upon detainees was widely reported at the time, including the egregious case of 14 internees, who were used as experimental test subjects for interrogation using sensory deprivation and related techniques such as sleep deprivation (McCleery, 2015, pp. 61–68).

Fields’s claims were far bolder, however. She claimed that internment in its entirety was essentially and intentionally an experiment upon the Catholic population in which those interned “were selected on an experimentally random basis”: “Since the subjects comprised a random sample of the male population, aged from seventeen to sixty-five, Catholic by birth, the measurable effects on them would be predictive for the whole population” (Fields, 1973b, p. 447). According to Fields, this “incarcerated experimental group” comprised “at least 10 per cent of the total Catholic population” (Fields, 1973b, p. 447)—a figure which reappears in the galleys, and is queried by Calvocoressi. Moreover, claimed Fields, the internment experiment continued after internees were released: “For this third phase remote control through scientific collaboration of academic and applied biological and social scientists was essential” (Fields, 1973b, p. 447). For Fields, local psychological researchers and health professionals were “counted upon to give passive assistance to the programme” by either evidencing its effects, or producing phony explanations such as “cultural conflicts, social conflict and frustration of [...] aggressive needs”

(Fields, 1973b, p. 447). These parties were unwitting dupes, if not conscious accomplices. In light of such evidence, the experimental techniques, according to Fields, were to be reliably extended through the remaining population—first Catholic, then Protestant—to foment factional violence between the two groups, and within the groups themselves in the imposition of paramilitary violence upon the peaceable majority (Fields, 1973b, p. 448).

Such allegations had also been anticipated in Irish press coverage in September 1972 of a newspaper interview Fields gave in the United States. Irish press coverage of the Troubles tended to be more skeptical of the official British account and also to contextualize violence within a larger political analysis (Elliott, 1977, p. 319). Although exact details in the Irish newspaper reports vary, they focus on her claim of intentional genocide, along with remarkable and poorly substantiated claims that 80% of internees had suffered brain damage and 90% of the Belfast and Derry population were dependent on tranquilizing drugs (Unsigned, 1972a, 1972b, 1972c). “Genocide’ In North Says American Professor” was the headline on the Cork-based *Evening Echo* (Unsigned, 1972d). Further Irish media attention ensued on the publication of Fields’s *New Humanist* article: the *Irish Press* opens with the question, “Is Northern Ireland a huge experimental laboratory of some million-and-a-half ‘guinea pigs’ for a Dr. Strangelove?”; it concludes “Rona Fields’ study report is written persuasively. It does give reasons for asking if there is a Dr Strangelove pulling the strings in the North, but to what purpose?” (Unsigned, 1973).

Whatever the truth of Fields’s claim of intentional psychological genocide, it was largely redacted via the removal of around two pages of material. The record of how this happened is incomplete, and there is no further contemporaneous documentation. Penguin later insisted that all changes were made with the author’s permission. Penguin editor Julia Vellacott states in correspondence that “[a]s far as I know the two pages that were cut were cut with Rona Fields['] consent,” and also dismisses Fields as “a bit nutty, not to say paranoid” (Letter: Vellacott, Opton, December 11, 1973). The claim is repeated at around the same time by Martin Lightfoot: “All changes made to the book at various stages in its production were made with the author’s consent” (Letter: Lightfoot, Opton, 14 December 1973). Fields, however, was to deny this. It is clear, though, that the final redactions were made at speed, at the end of an extremely rapid editorial process in which external review had been communicated orally, by telephone, rather than in writing (Letter: [Lightfoot?], Rose, January 8, 1974). The circumstances, and Fields’s anxieties, were not conducive to effective communication and agreement between author and publisher.

4 | PUBLICATION AND BEYOND: THE NARRATIVE OF CENSORSHIP

When *Society* was published in late October 1973, it met almost immediately with John Whale’s review in the *Sunday Times* of 28 October 1973. British press coverage of the Troubles tended to a reductive and rather credulous general image that concentrated on human interest and which presented political violence as the product of incomprehensible atavistic forces; the British Army, in contrast, “appeared as almost above the fray—brave, tormented, but largely inactive except as a rather superior kind of Boy Scout Troop” (Elliott, 1977, p. 355). While *Sunday Times* coverage no doubt shared these general flaws, it also had a reputation for insightful reportage on the conflict via its investigative Insight team, whose 1971 reportage was later published in expanded form as a Penguin Special entitled *Ulster* (The Sunday Times Insight Team, 1972). The Insight team had in fact been aided by Whale while writing their book (The Sunday Times Insight Team, 1972, p. 311), so the latter brought additional authority to his overwhelmingly negative review: “No work on Northern Ireland has been so badly done”; Whale finds “fierce partisanship, unsubstantiated accusation, repeated inaccuracy of fact and phrase, and the misspelling of 27 different proper names; and all this from a trusted publishing house, and in the name of education” (Whale, 1973). Although Whale disputes Fields’s methods, such as her use of postal questionnaires or casual conversations, most of the review is given over to errors in uncontentious facts, in style and grammar, and in spelling. He points out, for instance, that Ireland left the Commonwealth in 1949 and not during the Second World War. He criticizes Fields’s grammar, as well as her inflated style (for instance, the word “talk” might substitute for Fields’s “verbal interaction on a one-to-one basis” [Whale, 1973]). Of the many spelling errors, Whale notes that the “commonest mistake is

Shankill for Shankill, the name of the best-known street in Belfast" (Whale, 1973). Whale concludes that Penguin "should withdraw the book" not, he claims, because of these many errors in themselves, but because, as a Penguin Education title, "Sixth-formers and students will find it in front of them as a specimen of the acceptable use of words and of evidence" (Whale, 1973).

Fields responded via an interview the *Irish Press*, which was published in their Monday edition of 29 October 1973 (Patton, 1973c). Fields is quoted and paraphrased as making three distinct allegations. The first is that two pages on "psychological genocide" in her introductory chapter were deleted because of British government censorship, either in the form of "an official D-notice" or because of a "military commander in the British army contacting my publisher and suggesting the book be censored." The second is that spelling and other error were left deliberately in the book by Penguin in order "to discredit both her and the findings of the book." Third, Fields suggests that a D-notice ban meant that her book was not available in bookshops. By Tuesday 29 October, the *Irish Press* had received copies of Penguin's correspondence with Rowlands as well as proofs of the two redacted pages (Patton, 1973a). Although the correspondence itself, as shown above, does little to vindicate Fields's claims of censorship, Field is paraphrased as claiming "it is possible and perhaps probable" that telephone conversations between Rowlands and Penguin led to the redaction. The *Irish Press* also have a letter of October 5, 1973 (not held in archival editorial files) from Jonathan Croall in which he acknowledges Fields's concern about typos in the proofs: "My earlier letter covers some of the things you raise in your one of October 1. I'm very sorry about the types [*sic*], but for a book done at this speed if that's the extent of the errors I don't think it's a major disaster, though very unfortunate. Shankill, I must say, I thought was spelt without a 'h' but that, too, is unfortunate." (This letter, incidentally, suggests that Fields had restored her incorrect spelling of Shankill). By Wednesday, October 31, both Penguin and Rowlands are quoted in the *Irish Press* repudiating the allegations (Patton, 1973b). Penguin deny any kind of conspiracy, but muddy the waters by claiming incorrectly that Rowlands's intervention came after the book had been edited (which implies no changes after Rowlands's letter). Rowlands denies any telephone contact with Penguin, and he calls for the reissue of a corrected edition.

The press reception of *Society* was by no means wholly negative: a *New Society* review saw it as a "series of vignettes of life in Ulster," and thought that this "journalistic type of achievement perhaps offsets the factual errors and social science prose of the book" (Rose, 1973, p. 287). But Whale's review proved decisive: Fields's book was withdrawn from publication almost immediately after telephone consultation with Calvocoressi as Managing Editor, who was overseas at the time (Letter: Calvocoressi, Sansever, June 25, 1974). Although there is no contemporaneous file material (discussions seem to have been urgent, spoken consultations), there are narratives in the immediate aftermath that show Penguin's reasoning. In response to a letter from the distinguished US psychologist Edward Opton (Letter: Lightfoot, Opton, December 14, 1973), Martin Lightfoot recounts Rowlands's intervention, providing essentially the same narrative as revealed above, and insisting that there was no further communication beyond their correspondence. Lightfoot also explains Penguin's reasoning in withdrawing the book. He characterizes Whale's piece as "an absolutely swingeing review" in "our largest national quality Sunday." Although he thinks Whale's review is unfair, he concedes that "the book is absolutely crawling with errors, to an extent which is very damaging to our reputation as publishers." Many of these errors, he admits, are Penguin's fault because the book was poorly copy-edited in the haste to publish. On the other hand, "A very large number [...] were Rona's errors - wrong facts, dates, names, and so on. We had corrected a heck of a lot of these already in the preparation of the manuscript, but there were evidently a lot more." He concedes that "we should have had the whole thing checked by a specialist with a microscope," while repudiating Field's suggestions that the errors were deliberate left to discredit her ("words fail me"). At any rate, continues Lightfoot, "After a lot of heart-searching I decided that we simply couldn't go on allowing the book to be sold in its present state. We had to put it right. So we withdrew it and announced that we would reissue it as soon as possible." Lightfoot notes that this will entail "a pretty massive loss on the book," and he asks Opton for a testimonial in support of Fields and the book itself.

As for the matter of alleged state intervention, Lightfoot states, “The suppression thing is, forgive me, Rona’s paranoia.” He elaborates: “neither I nor, so far as I know, anyone in Penguins has been subject to any kind of pressure from the British Government or the British Army.” The D-notice system has not been used, and, Lightfoot believes, is in fact “only used for newspapers.” The remaining possibilities for censorship “are the public, legal ones—libel, obscenity, sedition—and these can obviously only operate in a deterrent fashion (you have to publish the nasty thing first before anyone can take you to court for it).” Lightfoot’s account of the available possibilities for lawful state censorship is broadly accurate. The (still extant) D-notice system is, as Pauline Sadler explains, “an arrangement between the government and the media whereby the media agrees not to publish certain government information which is sensitive on the grounds of being a threat to national security” (Sadler, 2001, p. 1). The agreement consists of standing notices on certain kinds of information, and the system is “voluntary and extra legal,” with “no legal requirement for the media to participate” and “no legal penalties in the event of a breach” (Sadler, 2001, pp. 1–2). The D-notice committee in 1973 was known as the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee (DPBC), and as the name suggests, D-notices extended at that time only to press and broadcast media—not to publishing houses. In fact, in early 1973, the DPBC had invited the Publishers’ Association to join, but the latter had declined (Wilkinson, 2009, p. 361). Moreover, in August 1973, the DPBC was still discussing “whether the domestic conflict in Northern Ireland should be covered by D-Notices, which currently applied only to external threats” (Wilkinson, 2009, p. 362). There were, of course, alternatives to the D-notice system. Sadler explains how, in the 1970s, because of “the perceived failure of the system to be effective in censoring what the government regarded as sensitive information, a different approach was taken, the government turning to legal avenues to protect sensitive information” (Sadler, 2001, p. 49)—whether prosecution under the Official Secrets Act in the 1970s, or by the 1980s, the “civil action of breach of confidence” (Sadler, 2001, p. 51). But these are again inapplicable to *Society* and to Rona Fields: the text contained nothing that was a matter of official secrecy, nor had Fields entered into any agreement of confidentiality with the British or Northern Irish state.

Indeed, as the British state itself recognized, the most realistic possibility of legal suppression came not from the state but from a private libel action. A letter in early July 1973 from the Northern Ireland Office to the Information Research Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office refers to Fields’s *TES* article as “a particularly offensive piece,” noting that “[s]ome of her allegations, particularly one of religious bias in hospital treatment, caused very great resentment here” (Letter: Hill, Tucker, July 9, 1973). The author of the letter has heard that Fields will be publishing a book with Penguin (under its original title, *On the Run*). He suggests, “[I]f you have any friends in that company you might warn them that the book will be carefully scrutinised by a number of people here who will have libel actions in mind.” The reply from the Information Research Department reveals that they are already aware of Fields because of her *New Humanist* article and its “curious thesis” (Letter: Tucker, Hill, July 12, 1973), as well as her supposed Republican allegiances. However, they have no influence over the company, which indeed they regard also with suspicion:

We have no close links with Penguins; indeed, we have been concerned for some time about the irresponsible nature of some of their recent non-fiction, particularly in the foreign affairs context. There is clearly some Trotskyist or other extremist bias at work at the editorial level in this company. We shall be particularly interested if, in fact, libel suits follow.

The Information Research Department follow the controversy in the press that surrounds the publication and withdrawal of *Society* with quiet satisfaction: “Fortunately Dr. Fields has already helped to discredit herself by alleging that Penguins deliberately introduced spelling errors in order to discredit her” (Memo: Knight Smith, Tyrer/Tucker, 2 November 1973). A manuscript annotation to this memo declares that “this silly woman is ruining what reputation she ever may have had; & the more she talks the better for us.”

These remarks from within the FCO chime with Penguin’s self-estimation that they had “published much more insurrectionary thing[s] without the British Government ‘stepping in’” (Letter: Vellacott, Opton, December 11,

1973). However, Fields's narrative of state suppression gained credibility as it was repeated and circulated in sympathetic international contexts. Penguin's US office received in May 1974 a letter from Paul O'Dwyer, a civil rights lawyer who was a high-ranking New York politician and brother to the Mayor of New York, William O'Dwyer. For O'Dwyer, the narrative of British governmental suppression was firmly established: "The intervention on the part of the London and Belfast governments is a publicly acknowledged fact. Whether it be legal or not, it is *de facto* censorship" (Letter: O'Dwyer, Penguin, May 31, 1974). He continues: "In how many instances other than this were the public denied access to a publication which the government of Great Britain found objectionable?" He issues vague legal threats, inquiring "[s]hould Americans be subjected to this surreptitious kind of evasion of the First Amendment to the Constitution by a company enjoying corporate protection?" and asking whether Penguin in the United States are active in the "dissemination of propaganda" by a foreign country (i.e., Britain).

Fields's accusation of censorship was and remains unsubstantiated. Equally without substance is the supposition that *Society* was withdrawn (and never republished) because of its scientific deficiencies. As work toward a revised edition began, Penguin contacted psychological experts to assess the book. Martin Richards of Cambridge University thought that the book, though not "brilliant," was "an important addition to the literature on 'action' psychology and on Ireland" (undated report: Richards). Aside from the "very poor" standard of the "subediting," it has two main weaknesses: "the thinness of its factual basis, and the tendency to over-generalise and to see conspiracies everywhere." Henri Tajfel at Bristol University criticizes Whale's *Sunday Times* review as in "bad faith" (Letter: Tajfel, Rose, January 2, 1974), being more concerned with the "enumeration of inaccuracies" than "genuine criticisms of content and method." However, Tajfel thinks that the book should be revised because it is "neither 'science' nor is it presented as a straightforward description of the personal experiences of a psychologist who finds herself in a situation which few of us ever manage to approach (and most are afraid to)." Her work is not scientific since her conclusions are "very tenuous" and her knowledge of the research literature is "entirely inadequate." Tajfel thinks that the book "should be treated as a first draft which needs careful rewriting by the author herself" in which she presents her conclusions instead as hypotheses. A better subtitle, Tafel suggests, would be "Northern Ireland seen by a psychologist."

Penguin also received unsolicited expert advice from the psychological professions in communication from Mark Haggard, Professor of Psychology at Queen's University Belfast. Haggard wrote to Penguin, ostensibly to ask if *Society on the Run* was being reissued, and to find out if Penguin had indeed removed material from the original edition that derived from Fields's article in *New Humanist* (Letter: Haggard, Lightfoot, January 10, 1974). Haggard, with some accuracy, summarizes the article as claiming that "the Northern Ireland situation was the product of some psychological experiment by a putative backroom boy in the British Military." He objects to Field's representation of him as "a stuffy and uncooperative local." He characterizes her as a "nonpsychologist" who is not "professionally competent to assess brain damage" in former internees. Her book is based on "pseudo-data" and is overall "a huge quantity of drivel." There is only virtue in the book, albeit one that is self-evident: "the release of internees is going to pose a specific mental health problem which will demand the training of lay aides from within a population trusted by the ex-internees." Haggard sarcastically remarks that he hopes the claim of redaction is untrue since it "[i]t would of course be regrettable if publishers removed the more telling evidences of paranoia from the works of cranks." Lightfoot's reply is cool: he finds it "a little difficult to reply to your letter" since Haggard seems to be saying "that publishers should not endeavour to improve books on the grounds that this process is likely to protect the author," whereas "the same process is likely to make for a better book and publishers should ideally be in the business if [*sic*] publishing such books" (Letter: Lightfoot, Haggard, January 22, 1974).

For her part, Fields rallied her expert supporters. Opton contacted Penguin, referring (as Lightfoot's reply reveals) to one or more petitions, presumably supportive of the suppression narrative (Letter: Lightfoot, Opton, December 14, 1973). Opton endorses Fields and her work: she has "gathered data from all parties to the conflict," particularly from "recently tortured men" and "young children." He compares her investigation of torture favorably to the work of Franz Fanon, and criticizes Whale's review as "unbalanced" because of its focus only on the defects of the book (Letter: Opton, Lightfoot, December 25, 1973 (i)). This letter was presumably copied also to Fields, for

Opton sends a separate missive to Lightfoot, dated the same day, in which he adds some frank addenda, which were presumably not seen by Fields. With regard to the publication and withdrawal of *Society*, he has “made quiet inquiries of some other people in England” and is therefore “inclined to believe your estimate of the facts is much closer to the truth than Rona’s” (Letter: Opton, Lightfoot, December 25, 1973 (ii)). He thinks a “rewriting job” is needed, but nonetheless defends Fields as “an amazing person” who has done well to complete a book given her “other multitudinous, simultaneous commitments.”

As these differing evaluations suggest, Fields’s book was indicative of boundary work within psychology, and within the jostling for epistemic authority as a true “insider” that accompanied analyses of Northern Ireland. Penguin were essentially uninterested in this issue. Their list was extensive and varied. It included the hard-nosed espousal of supposed psychological statistical objectivity in the work of Hans Eysenck (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1953; Eysenck, 1957, 1965), feminist social critique by psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell (Mitchell, 1971), and countercultural and antipsychiatric manifestos by Laing (1967) and David Cooper (D. Cooper, 1968; D. G. Cooper, 1971). Penguin accepted such intradisciplinary contestation with equanimity. Calvoceossi comments with respect to *Society* that

there is some sort of conflict between academics as a whole who are very rigorous and will not accept anything that has not been tried out either on rats or on people in boxes, and some other psychologists who feel that social psychology will not advance at all unless social psychologists try to apply insights based on field-work of a less precise kind. (Letter: Calvoceossi, Rose, November 23, 1973)

The same thought is echoed by Martin Lightfoot, who takes issue with Tajfel’s conclusion that *Society* is unscientific: “the question of ‘hard data’ and what counts as such is I think a more controversial one (in the social sciences) than he is allowing here”—“the ‘science’ part of ‘social science’ is professionally much in dispute” ([Lightfoot], Rose, January 8, 1974). Penguin felt reasonably assured of the scientific merits of Fields’s book: according to Calvoceossi, the new psychological reviewers thought “the psychological parts were fascinating and original” but “regarded the political stuff in the early chapters as unlikely” (Letter: Calvoceossi, Rose, November 23, 1973).

Although Penguin were confident that *Society* could be revised into a valuable contribution to psychological research, the question remained of the text’s factual and historiographic accuracy with respect to Northern Ireland, as well as to any potentially defamatory material that could lead to legal suppression. A further hindrance was the closure of Penguin Education in March 1974, at which point 42 of its staff were made redundant (The West Drayton Collective, 2017, p. 74). As Fields submitted revisions of the text during 1974, they were sent to a new contact, the editor Neil Middleton, who was a committed Marxist and well acquainted with Northern Irish affairs (Eagleton, 2016). Middleton concluded that “many of the corrections have not yet been made” (Memo: Middleton, Calvoceossi, July 11, 1974). Because of these concerns about Field’s factual accuracy, Middleton sent the revised proofs to Dennis Lehane, coauthor of *Political Murder in Northern Ireland* (Dillon & Lehane, 1973), which had been published simultaneously with *Society*. In response, Lehane provided a highly critical commentary on the first 84 pages of *Society*, drawing attention to around 50 apparent factual errors in these pages (Letter: Lehane, Middleton, July 19, 1974). He also criticizes Fields’s allegations about medical indifference to the Catholic minority, as well as the evidential basis for her larger claims (about the psychology of British soldiers, as well as, it seems likely, her residual claims of programmatic psychological warfare on the entire population).

Middleton also secured a libel report in October 1974 on the revised text of *Society* (Letter: Furness, Price, October 1, 1974). The report was particularly concerned about the risk of libel toward the medical profession in Northern Ireland when Fields made claims of neglectful or deficient treatment by potentially identifiable clinicians. The risk was identified when Fields named individuals: the report noted her claim that psychiatrist H. A. Lyons “holds the view that violence has a tonic effect on children” even though “[t]he quotation upon which the author relies does not really say this” and “it could be said to be defamatory of a child psychiatrist to hold such a view if it

were completely contrary to all the evidence and all the accepted views.” (This claim, incidentally, was preserved from the original published text [Fields, 1973a, p. 101]). At around the same time in 1974, Middleton gave the proof to a further, nonspecialist editor who in first 80 pages “found a further twenty-eight points which are clearly in need of checking or are obviously mistaken”—these “in addition to the fifty or so already raised in our report [i.e. Lehane’s]” (Memo: Middleton: Calvo-coressi/Price, November 21, 1974). The editor also found “numerous cases where the author’s glosses on other people’s work are so inaccurate as often not to make sense. As references are never given it is impossible for an editor to check them.” Middleton concludes that the book was “an unprofessional mess” and that further attempts should be made to dissolve the contract.

During the period of attempted republication, Fields had contracted the legal firm Bernard Sheridan & Company. In response to their initial correspondence, Neil Middleton states he will give no commitment to a publication date for the revised edition until he has “managed to complete the editorial work that is still so obviously necessary”; “It would be foolish in the extreme to allow the situation that occurred over the first printing to arise again” (Letter: Middleton, Sheridan, January 14, 1974). In due course, and in between various rebuttals of Fields’s allegations, Middleton corresponds with Bernard Sheridan in an effort to tackle the remaining and new corrections (Letter: Middleton, Sheridan, December 12, 1974). The requested revisions are far from mere pettifoggery. Indeed, they are often sympathetic to Fields’s case. But they ask for greater care in the use of sources, accurate quotation, the provision of references, corrections of matter of fact, possible libels, and the avoidance of careless writing. Middleton concludes his seven-page letter: “Short answers to my queries will [...] not be sufficient. What I need in many instances is a redrafted text from Dr Fields”—only then, and with Fields’s co-operation, will they proceed through the rest of the book. At this point, Fields clearly accepts that there is no possibility of republication in the near future. She makes an abortive attempt to buy up any remaining warehoused copies (Letter: Fields, Royalty Department, March 27, 1975), but finds that they have been pulped—the book having been withdrawn, rather than remaindered or left to go out of print (Letter: Middleton, Sheridan, June 10, 1975). The rights were finally returned to Fields on July 15, 1975 (Letter: Middleton, Sheridan, July 15, 1975).

5 | CONCLUSION: “THE AUTHOR/PUBLISHER RELATIONSHIP IS IN RUINS”

The historiographic temptation is to regard the withdrawal of *Society* as in some way related to the political and psychological controversies that accrued to its topic. This view, of course, was promoted by the professional actors in this frequently public drama. To Fields, an “outsider,” the redactions, misprints, errors, withdrawal, and failed revision process were evidence of the suppression of her book by British political interference, and indicative moreover of its veracity. Although the withdrawal was deeply aggravating to Fields, it could be partly redeemed by her strategy of strategic self-marginalization. As Jaap Bos et al. explain:

to represent oneself (or others) as being “marginalized” or an “outsider” can be a rhetorical, manipulative strategy, a way to find a new and professionally profitable niche for oneself; to favorably contrast one’s position from those conformists at or close to the center who do not dare to show intellectual independence; and to win positive attention from groups that represent other centers. (Bos et al., 2005, p. 222)

Fields could thus insist that her territorial and disciplinary marginality gave her an epistemic advantage over the local professionals—and this claim found favor in sympathetic professional and diasporic networks.

To “insiders” from the academic psychological networks of Northern Ireland, the withdrawal of *Society* was evidence of the book’s disciplinary failures (as alleged, for instance, to Penguin by Haggard). As the debate between outsiders and insiders intensified in the early 1980s, so this spatial distinction erupted in the *Belfast Telegraph*. In

August 1982, the political columnist Barry White covers “the disagreement between local psychologists and visiting experts as to whether or not the troubles leaves a lasting mark on children” (White, 1982). White reports that “mental health experts in Belfast have insisted that despite the violence on the streets, children have been largely unaffected.” However, “this view has been challenged by some outsiders,” including “Miss [sic] Rona Fields,” “whose Penguin book on the subject was withdrawn after protests from Belfast psychologists about its non-scientific approach.” White tends endorse the local view, as espoused by “Dr. Liz McWhirter” (who is dignified, unlike Fields, with her professional title). McWhirter, who “resents the interference of ‘academic tourists’ like Rona Fields,” uses “factual evidence” unlike “visiting experts, like Miss Fields, who try to dig deeper, and come up with Freudian explanations.” Fields’s claim to be the outsider who can really get inside the heads of the locals via interpretative methods is dismissed. White alludes to psychological interpretation of children’s art and writing, but mockingly cites an unsourced claim that Northern Ireland’s higher rates of road accidents can be explained by a Freudian death wish among drivers. Even where White quotes a general practitioner sympathetic to Fields’s claim that there are mass psychiatric casualties, the source remains critical of the “hundreds of Ph.D.s out of Ballymurphy and Moyard, by students from outside.”

What neither side seemed to appreciate about *Society* was that its withdrawal had little connection to their favored polemics. As the preceding analysis has shown, only Rowlands’s intervention can be evidenced, and it was effective only insofar as it led to a late and poorly communicated redaction of around two pages of *Society*. Haggard’s intervention was ignored by Penguin, who made use of their own psychological reviewers. Penguin’s account of events, which were more often circulated in private correspondence, was, therefore, substantially correct. In his internal correspondence with Penguin US in response to Dwyer’s intervention, Calvocoressi is adamant that *Society* “was withdrawn because it was badly published and fell below our own professional standards” (Letter: Calvocoressi, Sansevere, June 25, 1974). He concludes his letter, “anybody who tries to imply that we have been using the plea of professional standards in order to cloak political bias or acquiesce in political pressure is talking through his hat.” Much the same view was communicated by Calvocoressi to Fields via her solicitors. As the ill-fated revisions process nears its end, he expresses contrition over the botched publishing of *Society*: “I am very sorry that so much has gone wrong with this book, which contains many good things. I acknowledge that it was badly published, in as much as it contained too many misprints and was, in short, published in too much of a hurry (because its topicality seemed to call for speed)” (Letter: Calvocoressi, Sheridan, September 9, 1974). He does not though absolve Fields, for “there are also the author’s own shortcomings in her text and her somewhat reckless, not to say outrageous, calumnies of ourselves on various occasions.” Nonetheless, concludes Calvocoressi, “The sad fact is, however each of us may deplore the failings of the other, all this has happened. The author/publisher relationship is in ruins.”

The failure of the relationship between Fields and Penguin can be explained further by commercial imperatives. *Society* was commissioned by the Psychology editor for Penguin Education, but it was far closer in spirit to the Education Specials than to a school, college, or university textbook. (Indeed, Henri Tajfel thought Penguin Specials proper were the appropriate home for a revised edition [Letter: Tajfel, Rose, January 2, 1974]). *Society* was published to quickly meet demand in a mainland and Northern Irish market that was eager for informed analysis. Penguin were also competing with market rivals. They knew, for instance, that Morris Fraser’s *Children in Conflict* was nearing publication by Secker and Warburg (and indeed Penguin would publish it shortly after as a takeover in 1974). There were further economic imperatives behind the decision to publish at speed. As Lightfoot explains to Opton, Penguin’s “marketing people frequently bunch books together to maximise promotion resources” (Letter: Lightfoot, Opton, December 14, 1973). This was achieved by publishing *Society* together with Dillon and Lehane’s *Political Murder in Northern Ireland* (the two books were, in fact, reviewed together in Whale’s review, which was far more sympathetic to *Political Murder*). For these reasons, the decision was made “to publish fast and controversially” rather than “to wait and publish a more measured book” (Letter: [Lightfoot], Rose, January 8, 1974).

The errors pertaining to *Society* were part of larger difficulties that faced Penguin in the 1970s. As Peter Calvocoressi later records, the publisher was faced with two main problems (Calvocoressi, 1994, pp. 184–186).

Because of Penguin's many staff, and a very large annual list of new titles, there were difficulties in management and quality control. Calvocoressi would inspect the monthly batch of new titles, often reading them "with a beady eye for shortcomings in editing, proof-reading or production as well as their quality" (Calvocoressi, 1994, p. 185). This hands-on approach clearly extended to *Society* before and after its publication. The other problem was "Penguin's dependence on other publishers for the right to reprint their books as paperback under fixed-term licenses" (Calvocoressi, 1994, p. 184)—as rights reverted, so the original publishers were inclined to reissue within their own growing paperback lists. The only solution was to commission many more original titles, and so Penguin Education, like its parent house, was on the lookout for original material over which it could hold long-term rights, which had strong sales potential, and which it could bring quickly to market (aiding the imprint's balance sheet). *Society* was just such a text.

This case study of *Society* demonstrates the significance of book history to the history of psychological disciplines, complementing work that shows how Penguin's psychiatric list was "shaped as much by the commercial imperatives of the publishers as by developments and debates in psychiatry itself" (Miller, 2015, p. 95). Without book historical investigation, the withdrawal of *Society* would remain conscripted within practitioner-led narratives of political suppression and disciplinary boundary work. The truth is more prosaic, so to speak. Penguin, and Penguin Education, were sympathetic to Fields's work and to the arguments advanced in *Society*, albeit with reservations about Fields's more conspiratorial ideas. What they could not do, however, was publish, or keep in print, a book that failed to meet the "professional standards" articulated by Calvocoressi, and which were shared widely within the organization. The fate of *Society* was ultimately determined not by state operations, nor by the boundary work of Northern Irish academics and psychological professionals, but by its failure in mundane essentials such as factual accuracy, prose style, accurate citation, and careful expression.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The archival work for this project was funded by British Academy and Leverhulme Trust Small Research Grant SG162205. My thanks go also to archivist Hannah Lowery and her colleagues at University of Bristol Library Special Collections.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing not applicable—no new data generated.

ORCID

Gavin Miller  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3144-8233>

REFERENCES

- Baines, P. (2005). *Penguin by design: A cover story 1935–2005*. Penguin.
- Blackburn, D. (2020). *Penguin books and political change: Britain's meritocratic moment, 1937–1988*. Manchester University Press.
- Bos, J., Park, D. W., & Pietikainen, P. (2005). Strategic self-marginalization: The case of psychoanalysis. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 41(3), 207–224.
- Calvocoressi, P. (1994). *Threading my way*. Duckworth.
- Cooper, D. (Ed.). (1968). *The dialectics of liberation*. Penguin.
- Cooper, D. G. (1971). *The death of the family*. Allen Lane.
- Dillon, M., & Lehane, D. (1973). *Political murder in Northern Ireland*. Penguin.
- Eagleton, T. (2016). Obituary: Neil Middleton. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/13/neil-middleton>
- Elliott, P. (1977). Reporting Northern Ireland: A study of news in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In *Ethnicity and the media: An analysis of media reporting in the United Kingdom, Canada and Ireland* (pp. 263–376). UNESCO.
- Etchart, J. (2021). "You just went out and talked to them." An interview with Maurice Hayes (1927–2017) on the work of the northern ireland community relations commission (1969–1975). *Études irlandaises*, 46(1), 55–71.

- Eysenck, H. J. (1957). *Sense and nonsense in psychology*. Penguin.
- Eysenck, H. J. (1965). *Fact and fiction in psychology*. Penguin.
- Eysenck, H. J., & Eysenck, S. B. G. (1953). *Uses and abuses of psychology*. Penguin.
- Fields, R. M. (1973a). *A society on the run: A psychology of Northern Ireland*. Penguin Education.
- Fields, R. M. (1973b). Ulster: A psychological experiment? *New Humanist*, 88(11), 445–448.
- Fields, R. M. (1977). *Society under siege: A psychology of Northern Ireland*. Temple University Press.
- Frazer, H., & Fitzduff, M. (1994). *Improving community relations* (3rd ed.). Community Relations Council.
- Freire, P. (1972). M. B. Ramos (Ed. & Trans.), *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin Education.
- Gieryn, T. F. (1983). Boundary-work and the demarcation of science from non-science: Strains and interests in professional ideologies of scientists. *American Sociological Review*, 48(6), 781–795.
- Harris, B. (2020). Journals, referees, and gatekeepers in the dispute over Little Albert, 2009–2014. *History of Psychology*, 23(2), 103–121.
- Hayes, P., & Campbell, J. (2005). *Bloody Sunday: Trauma, pain & politics*. Pluto.
- Illich, I. (1973). *Deschooling society*. Penguin Education.
- Joicey, N. (1993). A paperback guide to progress: Penguin Books 1935–c.1951. *Twentieth Century British History*, 4, 25–56.
- Laing, R. D. (1967). *The politics of experience and the bird of paradise*. Penguin.
- Long, V. (2014). *Destigmatising mental illness?: Professional politics and public education in Britain, 1870–1970*. Manchester University Press.
- McCarthy, C. (1980, January 31). Healing the hostages. *The Washington Post*, A21.
- McCleery, M. J. (2015). *Operation Demetrius and its aftermath: A new history of the use of internment without trial in Northern Ireland 1971–75*. Manchester University Press.
- McGuinness, C. (2016). *Origins of psychology NI*: British Psychological Society Northern Ireland Branch.
- McWhirter, L. (1983). Looking back and looking forward: An inside perspective. In J. Harbison (Ed.), *Children of the troubles: Children in Northern Ireland* (pp. 127–157). Learning Resources Unit, Stranmillis College.
- Miller, D. (2014). Colonialism and academic representations of the troubles. In D. Miller (Ed.), *Rethinking Northern Ireland: Culture, ideology, and colonialism* (pp. 3–39). Routledge.
- Miller, G. (2015). Psychiatric Penguins: Writing on psychiatry for Penguin Books, c.1950–c.1980. *History of the Human Sciences*, 28(4), 76–101.
- Miller, G. (2017). David Stafford-Clark (1916–1999): Seeing through a celebrity psychiatrist. *Wellcome Open Research*, 2(30), 30. <https://doi.org/10.12688/wellcomeopenres.11411.1>
- Miller, I. (2021). Silence, distance and neutrality: The politics of emotional distress during the Northern Irish troubles. *Social History*, 46(4), 435–458.
- Mitchell, J. (1971). *Woman's estate*. Penguin.
- Morse, S. (2001, September 18). Coping with the aftereffects: Psychologists' group offers advice on handling the trauma of terror. *The Washington Post*, F5.
- Osborne, R. D., & Cormack, R. J. (1990). Higher education and fair employment in Northern Ireland. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 44(4), 325–343.
- Patton, K. (1973a, October 30). New chapter in book row. *Irish Press*, 4, 1.
- Patton, K. (1973b, October 31). No book plot, say Penguin. *Irish Press*, 4, 1.
- Patton, K. (1973c, October 29). Psychologist's north book 'was censored'. *Irish Press*, 1.
- Reid, L. (1977, August 27). A society under siege. *Irish Independent*, 7.
- Rose, R. (1973, November 1). Running scared. *New Society*, 287–288.
- Sadler, P. (2001). *National security and the D-notice system*. Ashgate.
- Samuels, C. A. (1999, April 28). Rumors incite fear at area schools after Colo. killings. *The Washington Post*, G1.
- Snelson, T. (2021). From in two minds to mind: The circulation of 'anti-psychiatry' in British film and television during the long 1960s. *History of the Human Sciences*, 34(5), 53–81.
- Taylor, R. (1988). Social scientific research on the "troubles" in Northern Ireland: the problem of objectivity. *Economic and Social Review*, 19(2), 123–145.
- The Sunday Times Insight Team. (1972). *Ulster*. Penguin.
- The West Drayton Collective. (2017). *This once was us: The life and death of Penguin Education*. Symposium.
- Thompson, E. P. (1970). *Warwick University Ltd: Industry, management and the universities*. Penguin.
- Toner, I. J. (1994). Children of "the troubles" in Northern Ireland: Perspectives and intervention. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 17(4), 629–648.
- Unsigned. (1972a, September 16). Britain 'trying to destroy the Irish.' *Cork Examiner*, 3.
- Unsigned. (1972b, September 21). Britain 'trying to destroy the Irish.' *Cork Weekly Examiner*, 12.
- Unsigned. (1972c, September 16). British out to destroy us—American. *Irish Independent*, 22.
- Unsigned. (1972d, September 15). 'Genocide' in North says American professor. *Evening Echo*, 1.

Unsigned. (1973, March 7). Is North a stamping ground for Strangelove? *Irish Press*, 9.

Whale, J. (1973, October 28). Bottom of the class. *Sunday Times*, 38.

White, B. (1982, August 25). Children of the Ulster troubles. *Belfast Telegraph*, 8.

Wilkinson, N. (2009). *Secrecy and the media: The official history of the United Kingdom's D-notice system*. Routledge.

How to cite this article: Miller, G. (2023). The book history of Rona M. Fields's *A Society on the Run* (1973): A case study in the alleged suppression of psychological research on Northern Ireland. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 59, 433–450. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jhbs.22262>