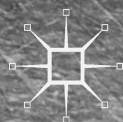


PALGRAVE STUDIES IN
THE HISTORY
OF CHILDHOOD

CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE IRISH CHILD IN THE INDEPENDENCE PERIOD, 1910-1940

Edited by
CIARA BOYLAN AND CIARA GALLAGHER



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Constructions of the
Irish Child in the
Independence Period,
1910-1940

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FOREWORD

As we move through the centenary of commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising, War of Independence and the more contentious Civil War in Ireland, it would be very easy to forget the plight of the lives of Irish children during this period. Furthermore, while we have been reminded of children as participants and victims in the action that took place, particularly during the Rising, we have talked far less of their social being and cultural and educational experiences. The editors are to be particularly praised for bringing together a set of accounts that recall the educational, social and cultural construction of children's lives during the period. The diversity of knowledge and understanding by contributors is particularly noteworthy in that this relates to a time where children were without rights and voiceless and living in a 'seen but not heard' era in Ireland. Worse still, the neglect and what was deemed to be acceptable physical and emotional abuse of thousands of children in Irish schools by teachers and others was left unsaid and to this day has never been properly addressed.

As the twentieth century progressed, the idea of children's rights began to emerge more forcefully, gradually impacting on Ireland. In 1924, the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the League of Nations; in 1959, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child was approved by the UN, and in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN. Ireland ratified the Convention in 1992 while more recently the Department of Children and Youth Affairs was established in 2011 and the 'Children's

Referendum' was passed in 2012. During the period when the concept of children's rights was gradually being adopted, a wide range of brilliant child activists emerged who contributed to the social, cultural and emotional development of children in a responsive and respectful way in the classroom (formally), in the community (informally) and in wider society. In my role as UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement, I am committed to the construction of the child as an active agent, with full rights, who should be enabled to co-determine the trajectory of their development on the path to adulthood. I and many others need to learn from the past, both from negative constructions of children as passive and without rights and from those who remained on the side of children.

This book does not just add to our scholarly knowledge of how children were constructed in Ireland in the past and is outstanding in doing so, but also highlights how our approach to children has changed for the better while perhaps suggesting that in some ways things have not changed enough. As such, the volume acts as 'moral anchor' to adults in listening to and supporting children. This is not just to the benefit of themselves and their families, but of all civic society.

Galway, Republic of Ireland
March 2018

Prof. Pat Dolan

PREFACE

The idea for this volume arose from both editors' involvement in the National Collection of Children's Books (NCCB) project, a two-year interdisciplinary project that examined children's books held in five libraries with a view to bringing to light the richness of children's books collections in Ireland. The project examined both educational and literary texts, producing a centralised online catalogue of over 250,000 books and a database of short descriptive analyses of noteworthy texts, paying particular attention to texts of Irish interest or with a connection to Ireland. One of the benefits of working on the NCCB project was the glimpses that were gained into the sheer diversity and complexity of material created for children in Ireland or existing within children's books collections in Ireland during any given period over the last number of centuries. The possibilities of the material created for children during the independence period held particular resonance and interest as we entered into the early stages of the Decade of Commemorations 2012–2022. The project had highlighted not only the broad interdisciplinary interest in children's books as forms of cultural production, but also the ways in which texts for children can be used to inform our ideas of historic Irish childhood from a variety of perspectives: historic, educational, literary and sociological. The potential significance of a volume examining various forms of cultural production and modes of reaching children in the independence period presented itself clearly to the editors.

The volume is supported by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI, Galway. The examination of historic Irish childhood

presented here is framed within the context of UNESCO's rights-based vision of youth and childhood that celebrates the active participation of young people in the life of the nation, not only as future adult actors but also as valued citizens with inherent rights. In this global vision of childhood, the young are seen as active citizens whose education, personal development and civic participation are regarded as integral to the life of the nation and the global community. Such a view contrasts starkly with a perception of children as passive recipients of value systems and citizens to be moulded (or indeed totems to which the nation turns to fulfil the symbolic needs of ideologies such as nationalism). This volume will explore how children were 'constructed' in Ireland at the birth of the independent nation, and in doing so provides an opportunity to reflect on how Irish society's approach to its youngest citizens has evolved and changed since 1922.

Galway, Ireland
Maynooth, Ireland

Ciara Boylan
Ciara Gallagher

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Martina Relihan's doctoral thesis explored the attempts by the Church of Ireland authorities to reach an accommodation with the education policies of the Irish state in the wake of the political settlement of 1922. Her work has been published in scholarly journals and books including Karin Fischer and Deirdre Raftery (eds) *Educating Ireland-Schooling and Social Change* (2013). Martina is a frequent visitor to the countries of the former Yugoslavia. She contributes to RTE Radio 1's *World Report* programme with political analysis from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Croatia.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Ciara Gallagher and Ciara Boylan

Focusing on the period before and after the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922, this volume explores how children were constructed by various actors in Ireland including the state, youth organisations, churches, charities, individual authors and publishers, and asks what possibilities were projected onto Irish youth during a period of instability and change. The history of childhood in Ireland is a new and rapidly emerging area of research; a number of recent publications, conferences and events testify to this burgeoning interest.¹ Associated areas of study such as the sociology of childhood in Ireland and children's literature studies, are likewise of recent origin.² Though the study of childhood, both contemporary and historic, was relatively late to develop in an Irish context, the momentum at present suggests a sense of making up for lost time. One of the noteworthy features of the history of childhood is the fruitful cross-fertilisation of a variety of disciplines—in particular literature, language studies, history, education and sociology—that has characterised the research output.

C. Gallagher (✉)
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The contributors to this interdisciplinary volume were approached because their research explores the broad variety of ways in which the Irish child was constructed by individuals and organisations who directly addressed children and youth, and impacted on their lives through social and cultural activities like education, sport, youth groups and cultural production ranging from literature to clothing. The volume explicitly aims to capture a broad range of constructions of the child and, reflecting this, covers themes that include gender, religion, social class and the politics of identity, citizenship and nation-building. Defining the boundaries of childhood is a notoriously fraught exercise, and contributors were left to determine those boundaries in their own research. The result is a volume that covers children's early years to the later teenage years across the island of Ireland. Contributors were asked to address the 'independence period', generously defined here as 1910–1940, but not necessarily to cover the entire period (though some chose to do so). In this regard, the editors were keen not to imply or even presuppose the idea of a sudden break with the past when Ireland gained independence in 1922, but rather to allow any continuities, discontinuities or abrupt disruptions after independence to emerge organically from the research. In short, a considerable degree of latitude was afforded to the scholars whose work is included here in order to capture as diverse a view of childhood in early twentieth-century Ireland as was possible. The result is a singularly wide-ranging volume that gathers together examinations of schools, public libraries, literature, clothing, play spaces, youth organisations and sport.

THE 'CONSTRUCTED' CHILD

This volume is not about the 'symbolic' child who appears as an archetype or projection of a society's aspirations or anxieties. Nor is it about the 'real' historic child embedded in their varied lived experiences. Rather this book is concerned with the constructed child. The constructed child is representative rather than symbolic or real. He or she is an epitome created in the minds of adults to represent the entire of his or her peer group. As the essays in this volume reveal so clearly, the policymaker, the librarian, the Boy Scout troop leader, the clergyman, the publisher and the children's author all constructed a different Irish child to represent a broader cohort. The constructed child exists; she lives and breathes and is encountered by adults in a variety of settings. However, she is simultaneously an abstraction from reality, a generalisation and often an ideal.

Much of the international scholarship on the history of childhood is concerned with the ways in which adults represented, conceptualised and constructed children and childhood.³ More recently scholars have begun to attempt a more thorough excavation of the lives of children in order to see how they lived in the world. As Sarah-Anne Buckley and Susannah Riordan summarise, the historiography has moved from how children were represented to what children experienced at the hands of the state and other agencies, to an attempt to discover the authentic voice and experience of children.⁴ In Ireland, perhaps because this historiography was relatively late in emerging, these issues are often being considered simultaneously.⁵

Scholars examining the evolving constructions of the child in Europe and North America over time have highlighted two divergent concepts of children and childhood, categorised by Jenks as the Dionysian and Apollonian image of the child.⁶ The Dionysian image, which resonated with and was influenced by, the Christian doctrine of Original Sin, presented the child as inherently corrupt, wilful, sensual and knowing, ontologically not much different from an adult. The child in this schema therefore required strict moral discipline to acquire virtuous habits, and his or her socialisation required authoritarian educational methods to inculcate moral precepts and reign in emotional excess. The alternative image of childhood, the Apollonian, saw the child as innately innocent and inherently good. This vision found its first clear exposition in the eighteenth century, in Locke's infant as *tabula rasa* and more pointedly in Rousseau's groundbreaking novel about education, *Emile* (1762), which proposed that, given their innate innocence, children should be allowed to develop 'naturally'. In pedagogic terms, this meant adopting 'child-centred' experiential forms of learning to teach basic life skills. The nineteenth-century Romantic conceptualisation of childhood as a time of blissful innocence, joy and indeed 'quasi-divine understanding lost in becoming adult' added a near-mystical aura to childhood.⁷

While Jenks acknowledges that the two images could coexist within the same time period, he linked Dionysian concepts with the 'old European order' characterised by strict (and constricting) codes of behaviour and the Apollonian concept to 'the new order of modern industrial society' with its increasing emphasis on individuality and individual freedom.⁸ However, the trajectory of Apollonian approaches was uneven, patchy and slow. For example, child-centred pedagogies that reflected the Apollonian image of the child were only firmly

embedded in educational policy and practice during the second half of the twentieth century; mass state-funded education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was dominated by a disciplinary, authoritarian approach that laid an emphasis on ‘useful’ knowledge and moral discipline.

Any reliance on such overarching transnational concepts of childhood tends to gloss over the variety of ways in which children were constructed, socialised, discipline, educated, cared for and loved in a given place and period.⁹ The challenge for historians of childhood is to examine how such overarching theoretical constructions interacted with other political, social and ideological processes in society and with detailed examinations of how adults constructed children within particular settings. The attention paid in the historiography of childhood to themes like the evolution of the nation-state, the operations of imperialism and nationalism and examinations of gender has offered important insights into how the child was constructed.¹⁰ The use of more ‘ground up’ approaches providing detailed examples of how children were constructed in a specific time and place by particular actors has also informed views of how the child is constructed. The social construction of the child can therefore be approached in three ways: using broad theoretical frameworks, drawing on existing histories of themes such as nationalism, religion, class and gender, and by providing more detailed examples of how children were constructed. All three function as mutually informing areas of scholarship. The approach taken in this volume is to examine how adults constructed children in a particular milieu and in doing so it sheds light on the operations of colonialism, nationalism, gender and on broader theoretical constructs of the child in an Irish context.

IRISH EXCEPTIONALISM

Scholars who engage with any aspect of the history of Ireland are often called to address the issue of Irish ‘exceptionalism’, that is, to suggest whether Ireland conformed to wider trends, was a law unto itself, or some combination of the two. The history of childhood is no different in this regard, and though this volume does not take a comparative approach, many of the essays address the influence of international ideas and processes or are suggestive of the tensions between these and constructions of the child in Ireland. The development of mass state-funded education in the nineteenth century might be taken as an illustrative

example of the ways in which the Irish experience both mirrored and diverged from wider trends. In the shadow of the French Revolution and confronting the dislocating effects of mass proletarianisation in the wake of the industrial revolution, European nation-states consolidating their power in the nineteenth century sought ways to protect the rights of property, maintain social hierarchies and contain the disruptive and potentially revolutionary forces of social unrest, as well as grappling with the challenge of uniting often quite heterogeneous populations divided by religion and ethnicity into a cohesive whole. The state in the nineteenth century was deeply concerned with moulding productive, compliant citizens as a matter of its own survival, and in this light, the emergence of state-funded mass education in Europe and North America has been viewed as a fundamental part of the state-building enterprise, with the aim of creating 'literate, useful and law-abiding citizens'.¹¹

In Ireland, a state-funded national education system was founded in 1831, almost forty years before its equivalent in England. This reflected the deep concerns of the British political establishment that Ireland was particularly susceptible to social instability, violence and unrest as a result of a number of factors including the intensity of sectarian divisions, the threat of popular Catholic nationalism which had advanced under Daniel O'Connell and the seemingly chronic and exceptional nature of Irish poverty. To frame this another way: the union with Britain in its political, social and cultural guises required an interventionist process of assimilation if it was to succeed. The non-denominational education system operated on the assumption that Irish children, particularly the children of the Catholic poor who formed the vast majority of the population, must be converted into law-abiding, British citizens who could contribute to Irish progress. This entailed disseminating practical knowledge on everything from husbandry to housekeeping, religious and moral education focused on the inculcation of prized Victorian virtues like prudence, forethought and industry, and even elementary lessons in classical political economy to curb any radical impulses. Irish history, geography and literature were a minimal component of the curriculum and the Irish language was non-existent.¹² The colonial or quasi-colonial assimilationist impulse differentiated the Irish education system from equivalent attempts by the state to educate the masses in the rest of the UK, while even in colonial India in the late nineteenth century the British state proved itself unwilling to commit the necessary resources and left the education of the native population to Christian missionaries.¹³

The level of religious control over education that evolved in Ireland was also notable. In their efforts to deliver secular mass education, European states were often forced into compromises with the various churches. In Germany, for example, the state relented to pressures and funded separate Protestant and Catholic school systems. Other states were more successful in defending secularism in education, in particular France, and it has been noted that the ‘broad pattern of mass education across much of Europe was that it became secularised gradually post-Enlightenment, culminating in the almost marginalisation of religiously branded education in western Europe after the *Kulturkampf*’.¹⁴ In Ireland, the state allowed denominationalism to become the educational reality in what was theoretically a non-denominational system. Clergy of different denominations managed and oversaw the operation of schools at a local level and the system operated as a denominational system from its earliest years.¹⁵ The Protestant and Catholic churches’ control of the education system was consolidated in the decades after independence, a period of particularly close alliance between the Catholic Church and the state. After 1922, efforts at moulding a compliant citizenry were in effect recast as efforts to revive the Irish language as a living vernacular, cultivate a deep patriotic attachment to the nascent Irish nation and promote a strong commitment to the Catholic faith. All of the above is enough to suggest that while state-funded education conformed to general trends for mass education as an arm of state-building, it did not fit any external international template easily.

In the period under consideration in this volume, 1910–1940, those who constructed the Irish child—the state, churches, civil society organisations, commercial interests and individuals—continued to draw upon and reflect the influence of outside ideas, and the essays gathered here to a significant extent confirm that the construction of Irish childhood was influenced by concerns prevalent elsewhere, without looking identical. What emerges from the volume is a sense that recognisable themes—Dionysian and Apollonian images of the child, aspirations to mould lawful and loyal citizens, the desire to inculcate middle-class respectability in poorer children, concerns about the inherent threat posed by working-class youth left unattended, the role of the education system—took on a distinctive local colour. At times, certainly, these outside ideas and processes were applied and adapted unproblematically to Irish conditions, but at other times tensions emerged between outside

ideas and the nationalist project as it constructed the Irish child. The overall view of the volume accords with the conclusion of the editors of a recent special edition of the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Society* that ‘Ireland was not cut off from the educational, social, religious, political, and economic discourses and ideologies surrounding the upbringing of children in the past. Yet because of its location, and British colonial influence vying with Gaelic culture from the 1500s onwards, the study of Irish childhood provides a particularly rich narrative of dualities, cultural hybridity, and the ability of children to adapt to new circumstances’.¹⁶

VOLUME PARTS

The challenge for the editors of such a wide-ranging and diverse collection of essays is to ensure that the contrasts between different constructions of the child and the connections and continuities are simultaneously available to the reader. In this regard, any division of chapters would undoubtedly have proven unsatisfactory. The volume is broken into three parts: Education and Learning, Literature and Language, and Material Culture and Organised Activity, as these represent the three broad spheres in which the Irish child was constructed. However, it is immediately necessary to note that these areas overlap in certain respects. For example, given the central role of education and the school system in a child’s life, essays concerning the details of a child’s school life are spread out across each of the parts and not confined solely to the part on Education and Learning. Children’s experience of reading material encountered in school forms part of the issues explored in Part II on Language and Literature, for instance in the chapter by Kate Harvey on the school plays of Sinéad de Valera, while Richard McElligott’s essay on sport in Part III includes a discussion of sport in schools. Key themes also range across parts, in particular, class, gender and nationalism.

PART I: EDUCATION AND LEARNING

The section on Education and Learning examines two arenas in which the state reached vast numbers of children, including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds: schools and public libraries. Thomas Walsh’s chapter traces the evolution of the concept of children and

childhood in Ireland and provides an overview of how both of these were constructed within the primary school curriculum in the opening decades of the twentieth century. The chapter begins by examining the concept of children inherent in the *Revised Programme of Instruction* of 1900, which resonated strongly with international developments and was informed by an Apollonian idea of the child and of education as the means of eliciting her or his innate goodness. By contrast, the narrow curriculum introduced in Ireland following independence was informed by a Dionysian idea of the child underpinned by the twin pillars of nationalism and Catholicism, a conceptualisation influenced by the Catholic Church but accepted by state. Indeed, the state's own particular emphasis on imbuing the curriculum with cultural nationalism likewise led to an educational approach that denigrated the status of the child as an autonomous agent and focused on knowledge transmission. In effect, as Walsh argues, there was little divergence between the social values upheld by church, state and citizens in the period which combined to reinforce the subordinate status of children.

Martina Relihan also examines the education system but focuses on the relationship between the Church of Ireland and the government between 1922 and 1940. In particular, she considers how the Church of Ireland authorities attempted to adapt to the Free State's curricular priorities which centred on the revival of the Irish language as the spoken language of the people and the inculcation of pride in a native culture which was defined exclusively in Catholic and nationalist terms. If the Free State authorities idealised the Irish child as Catholic, Gaelic and Irish-speaking, enlisting the education system in the ambitious aim of making this a reality, this construction was clearly challenged by the members of the main minority faith. The Church of Ireland, faced with this new educational reality, was forced to deal with issues such as the nationalist content of school textbooks, the difficulty of transporting pupils to its scattered network of schools and the curricular dominance of the Irish language. In general, accommodation was reached between the state and the Church of Ireland authorities, which mitigated the tensions caused by two competing constructions of the Irish child.

Máire Kennedy explores the period 1910–1940 as a key phase in the development of the network of public libraries in Ireland, central to which was a focus on library services for children. The aim of

self-improvement and the inculcation of moral values in readers, which formed part of the public library ethos from its foundation in the nineteenth century, combined in the independence period with a concern to create a national consciousness. In this latter sense, public libraries paralleled the nation-building efforts of schools. However, as Kennedy points out, unlike the education system, public library policymakers looked outward and drew on progressive international models of library provision for young readers, for example, trends in America and Britain on the importance of having dedicated spaces for children and appointing librarians specifically to run the children's sections in libraries. There was therefore an impulse to allow more room for creative exploration and encourage wide reading habits and participation through various library events in a way that quite often appeared to emphatically differentiate itself from the school system.

However, if libraries looked outward for progressive models of practice, these efforts were fundamentally designed to foster a kind of moral citizenship based on self-improvement. One is left with a sense of tension between an impulse to allow children's imaginations to roam free and the goals of socialisation. In constructing the child as a (future) 'moral citizen' of Ireland, a further contradictory impulse emerged as libraries sought to provide literature of a distinctly 'Irish' kind as well as 'the best' of English-language literature, reflecting libraries' dual emphasis on fostering a strong sense of national identity and creating a cultivated citizenry based on essentially Victorian bourgeois values. In Kennedy's view, this impulse ultimately produced conservative reading lists.

PART II: LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Part II, Literature and Language, includes contributions that discuss literary production for children in the period asking how authors, publishers and the texts themselves constructed Irish childhood. The impulses of creating a new national and often nationalist consciousness that emerge as a feature in the chapters in Part I are also manifested throughout the essays in this part, in ways that chime with and diverge from the essays on education. Kate Harvey's chapter focuses on the school plays of Sinéad De Valera and explores the role of drama in education in this period. She demonstrates how De Valera's plays were aligned, in form and content, with the nationalist ideals of the period, specifically as promulgated through the education system, and reflected in the modes

of performances preferred by nationalist groups. Yet, at the same time, as Harvey argues, De Valera's plays were much more than an attempt at constructing an uncritical, unvariegated nationalist citizen. Instead, what is revealed through Harvey's analysis is a space carved out for the child reader and participant, whereby interaction and engagement within the script of the play were possible, and where gendered assumptions and the complexity of the Irish colonial context were drawn upon and illuminated. Though distinctly in line with the values of contemporary educational policy and the emphasis it placed on nationalism and, above all, the Irish language, these dramas exert pressure on these parameters set by the education system. Harvey explores De Valera's interest in a progressive American pedagogical movement, Creative Dramatics. In her analysis of the effect of De Valera's interest in this movement, Harvey suggests a space within these dramas where children could engage with the script of the play, and perhaps by extension, with the script of the nation.

Róisín Adams' essay explores the development of Irish-language children's literature in the independence period and argues that this period can be divided into two phases: before and after the foundation of the State publisher An Gúm in 1926. Prior to the establishment of An Gúm, much of the Irish-language reading material produced for children in and about Ireland was keenly attuned to the ideological power of children's literature. Yet, surprisingly, this awareness of the power of constructing the child with a view to nation-building is apparently absent in the output of Irish-language children's literature from An Gúm, visible in the material translated from English that was at best irrelevant to the cultural, social and political context in Ireland, and at worst antithetical to it. Parallels may be noted in the State's attitude to the child apparent in Thomas Walsh's exploration of the curriculum after independence, which rendered the child as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, rather than focusing on the development of a holistic or a more nuanced concept of an 'ideal citizen'. This attitude is echoed in the ways in which An Gúm appears to have constructed the child as primarily a means for the propagation of the Irish language, with little apparent regard for a more thoroughgoing construction of the child as an active citizen. In contrast, Adams' exploration of Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha's *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, re-published by An Gúm in this period, situates the publication of this text as firmly outside both the inattentiveness of the corpus of material translated from English and the often dogged nationalism found in works from the period prior to 1926.

Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn's essay also explores this substantial corpus of material translated from English into Irish by An Gúm. Nic Lochlainn argues that this body of translated work demonstrates a complex amalgam of impulses, namely a rejection of Englishness as well as an over-reliance on English-language source material. Her essay explores what appear to be ideologically polarised impulses in An Gúm's choice of translated works. In her exploration of two strands of An Gúm's choices of translations—works of myth and folklore from Irish and European sources and the translation of British imperial adventure stories—Nic Lochlainn suggests that the concerns when translating these texts were not always as opposed as they seem. Running through this diverse body of translated texts is an overarching concern with purity, morality and a favourable depiction of the Catholic Church and religion, regardless of the material being translated. An allegiance to these values, Nic Lochlainn argues, created an imagined, ideal Irish-language child reader: male, Catholic and morally pure. Despite the variety of material translated during this time, Nic Lochlainn's essay suggests that the main concerns apparent in An Gúm's publications were narrowly focused on restricting and censoring, rather than actively creating proud, well-rounded Irish citizens, echoing Adams' reading above. In this regard, a restrictive focus on the moral purity of the child and the overtly Catholic nature of this morality, positioned as the ideal Irish-language reader, suggests an alignment with the post-independence curriculum explored in Walsh's essay. Furthermore, the entrenched values of An Gúm suggest that the difficulties faced by religious minorities explored Relihan's essay were not limited to the school system. An Gúm could hardly be said to be reaching out to, or even accommodating, potential young readers from different religious backgrounds.

Susan Cahill's contribution moves away from the homogenising impulses found in some of the Irish-language material of the period in an analysis of the interconnection between nationalist politics and discourses of female adolescence in *Bean na hÉireann* (Woman of Ireland), the first women's newspaper in the state and the periodical of the nationalist women's organisation, *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* (Daughters of Ireland). Unlike other publications for children and young people during this period, specific columns within *Bean na hÉireann* addressed female adolescents directly, creating a space for girls and what Cahill terms 'revolutionary girlhood'. Drawing on the work of Sally Mitchell, Cahill argues that the conceptualisation of the 'new girl' not only signified change and transformation, but also inherently contained ideas of rebellion. Arguing that

this newly conceptualised girl carries with her qualities that are attuned with Ireland's move towards independence, she explores the writing of Constance Markievicz and Sydney Gifford in *Bean na hÉireann*, arguing that in the writings examined, Markievicz identified and appealed to the category of 'rising young women' while Gifford constructed what Cahill terms the 'Gaelic girl'. Both categories demonstrate how nationalist discourse argued for the place of the girl within the active construction of the nation. Through making transnational connections in the idea of the Gaelic girl, rendering this nationalist discourse more outward-looking and dynamic as a result, the texts within *Bean na hÉireann* were not only claiming a space for girls within the nation but marking and changing this space.

Irish myth and legend had been established by the Cultural Revival as having a prominent role in forging a new Irish cultural identity, with the figure of the child accumulating particular resonance in material specifically aimed at adults. However, Rebecca Long's essay explores constructions of the childhoods of figures from Irish myth in texts published during the independence period, which were specifically for or read by children. Long argues that texts such as Violet Russell's *Heroes of the Dawn* (1913) and James Stephens' *Irish Fairy Tales* (1920) presented the childhoods of the mythic heroes Cuchulainn and Fionn Mac Cumhaill as a mode of experiencing the creation of Irish identity in an independent Ireland. Within these texts by Stephens and Russell where constructions of mythic childhoods are staged, child readers, and implicitly boy readers, are provided with not only an introduction to narratives so central to cultural nationalism, but also, as Long suggests, being 'constructed as the natural inheritors of this material', responsible for the preservation and reinvigoration of the past/myth and for forging the future/nation. Though these texts could be said to ostensibly use myth to construct a straightforward nationalist consciousness in the vein of the education system or the library system, Long's essay suggests that the child figure, and by extension the constructed Irish child, was situated as an active participant in a dialogue of nationalism.

PART III: MATERIAL CULTURE AND ORGANISED ACTIVITY

The final part on Material Culture and Organised Activity covers cultural production and organised activities for children and youth. Vanessa Rutherford's chapter explores the world of the Iveagh Trust Play Centre,

Dublin, established in 1909 by Edward Cecil Guinness as a philanthropic enterprise. The Play Centre offered a space for urban working-class children to partake in play activities with toys and books, one of the main aims of which was to foster particular values and behaviours. An examination of the Play Centre provides a context from which to expose some of the concepts, beliefs, identities and behavioural enactments that crucially influenced conceptions, representations and actualities of childhood in Ireland in the early twentieth century. Rutherford's chapter employs a critical discourse analysis to interpret and explain the ways in which play space, including the toys and material culture encountered there, contextualised and mediated childhood experiences, provided structure and form to children's lived experiences, and tacitly evoked exchanges and possibilities between children and children's bodies. Her chapter also makes clear that the Iveagh Trust Play Centre was designed to create a space for urban children to improve their physical and moral constitutions, noting the very clear class dynamics that underlay this desire to promote bourgeois values and behaviours.

Hilary O'Kelly's chapter on children's dress explores the ways in which dress functioned as a vehicle for inculcating ideology. She examines the Christian Brothers influential publication *Our Boys* between 1910 and 1940, and the ways in which narrative, picture and text combined in its pages as part of their campaign to mould Irish boys' identity. This was an aspirational identity grappling with the contradictions of modernity and Gaelic tradition. Though the forms of Gaelicness and the versions of modernity imagined by the Christian Brothers were very different to those invented by Constance Markievicz and Sydney Gifford, as explored in Cahill's essay, a comparable tussle between Gaelic ideals and modernity is apparent here. Like other authorities in Ireland in the independence years, including public libraries as suggested in Kennedy's essay, the Christian Brothers struggled to align conflicting aspirations of separateness and belonging in their campaign of promoting a new Ireland that was clearly distinct from English norms yet sufficiently orthodox and 'respectable' for inclusion in the modern world. O'Kelly defines the dilemma faced by the Brothers in how they depicted suitable dress for boys: 'how to express a distinctive national-heroic spirit while conforming to the norms of middle-class respectability essential for employability and social mobility in a transforming modern era'. This was a conflict the Brothers did not succeed in reconciling, and in the end, they effectively abandoned the attempt to promote Gaelic dress in the post-independence period.

Brendan Power investigates the development of the Boy Scouts in Ireland, focusing on a number of issues surrounding urbanisation, health and education, and how these were integrated with international ideas relating to adolescence as a distinct stage of development. Contemporary perceptions of the urban environment were a key determinant of the concerns that the Boy Scouts embodied and were central to how they constructed a particular vision of adolescent life. Power's chapter shows how the growth of urban centres in Ireland provoked similar anxieties to those prevalent in Britain, and how the desire to engage in rural-ly-orientated activities like camping was seen as a powerful antidote to the perceived deficiencies of urban life such as diminished physical health and the moral dangers associated with an unregulated environment for adolescent leisure. His essay therefore makes it clear how ideas about the degeneration, both physical and moral, of working-class youth in an urban setting and the specific vulnerabilities of adolescents as delineated by contemporary psychology, were transposed to Ireland.

Finally, Richard McElligott's chapter makes an important contribution to the history of sport and childhood in Ireland, a newly emerging area of research. He explores how developments in the relationship between sport and children in contemporary Britain both heavily influenced and stimulated a strong reaction in Ireland. Various organisations looked to formal sport to project the values they wished to incubate among Irish society's youth. McElligott investigates how schools, religious and lay youth movements, nationalist bodies and Irish sporting associations used sport as a means of appropriating the Irish child in the decades surrounding the creation of the Free State and the political partition of Ireland. As his chapter makes clear, both unionists and nationalists adapted the British ethos of athleticism which enabled sport to be seen as a means of promoting everything from loyalty to empire to a spirit of nationalism, denominational religious devotion, and a child's ethical character. His wide-ranging essay covers sports like cricket and rugby in elite schools (Catholic and Protestant) and Gaelic games and points to the common concern with the character-building properties of sport.

CLASS AND GENDER

The essays across the three parts of the volume provide the reader with a sense of the pervasive constructions of the child in Irish society in this period, extending across large swathes of a child's life and experience of

childhood. The diversity of the actors and organisations involved in the construction of the Irish child and the complexities of these constructions emerge as a feature of the iterations of the construction of the child that are explored. Thematically, the most significant issues to emerge across the parts of this volume are class, gender and nationalism.

Children and young people were evidently constructed in a class-conscious way by both the state and civil society. The imperative to reach and socialise children from across social classes is demonstrated in the essays on the education system and the public libraries, while the motivation to reach children and adolescents from lower socio-economic groups is apparent in the aims and operations of the Boy Scouts and the creation of the Iveagh Trust Play Centre for working-class children in inner-city Dublin. It is clear from Vanessa Rutherford and Brendan Power's contributions that urban working-class children were seen to be beset by a particular set of challenges that organisations sought to address in different ways.

More broadly, it is clear that organisations and actors, whether Catholic or Protestant, unionist or nationalist, state, religious or civil society, often constructed an idealised child according to what were essentially bourgeois values that prized character traits like cleanliness, industry, order, prudence, respectability and moral probity. This focus on ideals of middle-class respectability was the source of internal conflict for some bodies with an interest in constructing the Irish child. Interestingly, it was seen to effectively push the impulse to create a new nationalist consciousness back into conservatism, notable in the case of the Christian Brothers' approach to national dress and the libraries' apparent need to continue to encourage the development of essentially Victorian values. The concern of public libraries and the Christian Brothers with a kind of middle-class respectability and moral citizenship illustrates the lasting hold of Victorian bourgeois values well past the independence period.

The drive to construct, socialise and homogenise the child along explicitly gendered lines is most evident in the final part on Material Culture and Organised Activity. Attempts at constructing the child, and most notably the boy, spanned a variety of political and religious interests and demonstrate the high level of investment in constructing the boy for various groups in this period. O'Kelly's essay on how the Christian Brothers sought to use dress to construct Irish boyhood demonstrates how clothing was bound up with notions of male authority. McElligott

demonstrates how all political and religious sectors in Ireland saw the potential of athleticism to construct and mould the Irish child, but more particularly the boy, to achieve various ends. Similar ideals of shaping and moulding boyhood that might potentially veer towards volatility or individualism are notable in Power's essay on the Boy Scouts in Ireland. The chapters on publishing for children and adolescents also explicitly consider the implications of gender and gendered readerships, for example in Susan Cahill's discussion of the nationalist-feminist periodical *Bean na hÉireann* and Rebecca Long's argument that the retellings of mythic childhoods assume a male reader in its focus on boyhood. The explicit and invested concern with the gendering of the Irish child in the period emerges as specific to later childhood, as children entered the volatile and liminal period of adolescence. The enthusiasm for gendering the child with greater intensity in later childhood underlines a keen awareness of the potential of the Irish child, constructed along gendered lines. Despite the essays' focus on gender in later childhood, the larger tensions and dilemmas that emerge in the construction of the gendered child—a strict socialisation of the child against more child-centred ideals, the drawing on external ideals that would deepen conservative values or invigorate a nationalist outlook—remain central.

NATIONALISM AND THE NATION

Ireland between 1910 and 1940 was a society in flux, with competing visions of the nation and its future coming into dramatic conflict. Nationalism vied with unionism for the political future, ultimately leading to the partition of the island in 1920 with the creation of Northern Ireland. Within nationalism itself, various shades of green fought for predominance, with physical force republicanism ultimately thrusting aside the moderate constitutional nationalism of the home rule movement after the Easter Rising of 1916. After independence, and a bruising civil war, the new Free State government focused above all else on stabilisation. The conservative direction of the new state included a cultural retraction that sought to limit Irish society's exposure to outside ideas and influences, most obviously through censorship legislation. The focus was on celebrating and reinvigorating the national culture, a strategy most aggressively deployed through the national school system. Independence left thousands of Irish Protestants seemingly marooned in a state which identified itself closely with the Catholic Church, not

simply as a badge of Gaelic nationalism but in terms of social mores and values and the pre-eminence given to Catholic social teaching, reflected most famously in the 1937 Constitution.

In short, Catholic nationalism was the dominant ideology of this period and as one might expect constructions of the Irish child were heavily influenced by this (it is noteworthy that of the three organisations covered in this volume that offered non-nationalist constructions of the child, the Iveagh Trust Play Centre, Boy Scouts and the Church of Ireland, two operated in the pre-independence period). However, given Ireland's history of colonialism and connection with Britain and its position as a largely English-speaking country, it is unsurprising that one continues to see the influence of educational and psychological theories, ideas of masculinity, conceptions of poverty and moral improvement, and literary trends prevalent in Britain and elsewhere. A significant number of chapters explore the ways in which the state, organisations and individuals constructed the Irish child by drawing upon ideas and material that looked outward, beyond Ireland and the politics and preoccupations of Irish nationalism. In some cases, the outward-looking impulse saw the application of ideas and theories, such as those of British athleticism or the concerns of the Boy Scouts on the degenerative effects of urban environments, adapted in relatively uncomplicated ways to an Irish context. However, other essays collected here are concerned with the challenge of integrating these constructions of the child—gendered constructions, class constructions, Dionysian and Apollonian constructions—into the nationalist project of nation-building. How, as noted above, to marry ideas of middle-class respectability, fundamentally Victorian in nature, to a construction of a Catholic-Gaelic childhood? How might international pedagogic ideas be put into use in a period characterised by a narrow educational focus on creating patriotic Irish citizens? The volume exposes tensions between a culture seeking to consolidate Gaelic-Catholic nationalist values and 'outside' ideas. Nor was this a straightforward case of a staid and conservative nationalist culture encountering progressive 'foreign' ideas. As a number of these essays show, nationalist culture was capable of considerable dynamism and imagination both when considered on its own terms as well as on its ability to integrate outside ideas and adapt them to suit its own agenda.

Although childhood appears in many of these essays as an entity to be shaped, tamed and homogenised, children were not simply viewed as passive receptacles; they were constructed to some degree as active agents. Both Róisín Adams and Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn discuss *An Gúm's*

publishing record in detail, demonstrating how the state publisher appeared to focus almost exclusively on constructing the Irish child as a vessel for the promotion of the Irish language. The looking outward to English-language material to translate led to a stultification rather than a stimulation of possibilities for the child's imagination, as well as the construction of the Irish child. However, though Nic Lochlainn's essay demonstrates the continual impulse towards conservatism and censorship in the translated works discussed, moments of disagreement from translators, authors and reviewers are significant interjections. Moreover, as Adams details, the innovation of Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha's *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, significantly demonstrates the possibility of invigoration coming from within Ireland, its native language and tradition. Rebecca Long's essay on the retellings of mythic youth imagines an active citizenship for the young reader, while Kate Harvey's discussion of Sinéad De Valera's drama for schools also points to a less constricted use of literary forms influenced by outside ideas. Susan Cahill's essay points most strikingly of all to the possibilities for a dynamic construction of the child that melded Irish and international ideas, and created something uniquely relevant to an Irish context. The writing aimed at young women published in *Beanna hÉireann* produced meaningful reflection on and the creation of new categories within which the Irish girl could not only exist but could actively influence the shaping of the nation. The picture that emerges of literary production for children is therefore considerably more dynamic than one might expect of a period apparently characterised by cultural homogeneity and conservatism. Some of the essays reveal an effort to bring the child into dialogue with the emerging nation, to imagine a place where the child citizen could actively shape and influence the new nation. In short, the nationalist consciousness projected different concerns onto the child, depending on the source and context, constructing a child that was variously Catholic, upholder of conservative moral values, active agent of the nation, rebellious and outward-looking.

It is clear that the state was a dominant actor in constructing the child in this period, and the essays in this volume cover the education system, the library system and the state Irish-language publisher An Gúm. It is also clear that civil society actors bolstered the state's attempts to mould children according to a particular vision, whether this was the Christian Brothers envisioning an ideal Irish boyhood, authors reinvigorating Irish mythology among a child audience or the Gaelic Athletic Association fostering native games among Irish boys and girls. However, as the essays

make clear, these actors constructed the child in their own distinctive way, drawing on a diverse set of ideas. Constructions of the child were not imposed in a top-down fashion from a centralised state, through civil society organisations and individuals, and onto children.¹⁷ Rather than a homogenous and insular drive towards a version of nationalism inextricably linked with Catholicism that is often considered as dominating the period, the essays in this volume suggest a more variegated picture, pointing to numerous tensions, conflicts and inconsistencies in the way the Irish child was constructed during this time.

CONCLUSION

Within the broad paradigm of a nationalist construction of the child, there were equally relevant and sometimes competing claims. The interdisciplinary approach taken in the volume has allowed for inconsistencies and tensions to emerge clearly, revealing that the state and civil society both grappled with the claims of a cultural nationalist agenda, middle-class morality, multiple religious identities, gender and varieties of modernity. The period around Irish independence is currently undergoing intensive scrutiny as the Decade of Centenaries (2012–2022) unfolds and continues to yield an abundant scholarly harvest. This volume, which addresses Irish childhood in this period for the first time, generates insights into Irish childhood at a pivotal moment in the country's history. A variety of ideals and ideologies competed to inform how children were constructed by the adults who looked on them as embodying the future of the nation. By focusing on this critical period in Ireland's history, the essays in this volume ask fundamental questions about how children were constructed as part of the idealisation of the state before its formation and the consolidation of the state after its foundation.

NOTES

1. Key publications include Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan, eds., *Adolescence in Modern Irish History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Maria Luddy and James Smith, eds., *Children, Childhood and Irish Society: 1500 to the Present* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2014) which emerged from a workshop and special issue of *Éire-Ireland*, 'Children, Childhood and Irish Society', special issue edited by Maria Luddy and James S. Smith,

- Éire-Ireland: and Interdisciplinary Journal of Irish Studies* 44, no. 1&2 (Spring/Summer, 2009); John Countryman and Kelly Matthews, eds., *The Country of the Young: Interpretations of Youth and Childhood in Irish Culture* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2013). In 2016, *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* published a special issue edited by Sarah-Anne Buckley, Marnie Hay and Riona Nic Congáil focussing on Ireland: *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2016). The History of Irish Childhood Research Network was set up in 2014, and the first History of Irish Childhood conference took place in June of that year. A project to establish a national Museum of Childhood in Ireland is ongoing. Earlier collections are few e.g. Joseph Dunne and James Kelly, eds., *Childhood and Its Discontents: The First Seamus Heaney Lectures* (Dublin, 2002).
2. Children's literature emerged somewhat earlier as a discipline and a small but significant corpus of work exists. See Celia Keenan and Mary Shine Thompson, eds., *Studies in Children's Literature, 1500–2000* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005); Celia Keenan and Mary Shine Thompson, eds., *Treasure Islands: Studies in Children's Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006); Mary Shine Thompson and Valerie Coghlan, eds., *Divided Worlds: Studies in Children's Literature* (Four Courts, 2007); Mary Shine Thompson, ed., *Young Irelands: Studies in Children's Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2011); Ciara Ní Bhroin and Patricia Kennon, eds., *What Do We Tell the Children? Critical Essays on Children's Literature* (Cambridge Scholars, 2011); Nora Maguire and Beth Rogers, eds., *Children's Literature on the Move: Nations, Translations, Migrations* (Four Courts, 2013); Marian Thérèse Keyes and Áine McGillicuddy, eds., *Politics and Ideology in Children's Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2014).
 3. The seminal work is Phillipe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962). Other influential accounts that discuss how children were represented include Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England, 1872–1989* (London: Routledge, 1994); Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood, and English Society, 1880–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood Since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995); Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).
 4. Sarah-Anne Buckley and Susannah Riordan, 'Childhood Since 1740', in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, eds. Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 328.
 5. Notably, the landmark edited collection *Children, Childhood and Irish Society: 1500 to the Present* (2014) combines all three approaches to the history of childhood.

6. Chris Jenks, *Childhood*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2005). For a discussion of Jenks, see Karen M. Smith, *The Government of Childhood: Discourse, Power and Subjectivity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
7. Laurence Brockliss, 'Introduction: The Western Concept of Childhood', in *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After*, ed. Benjamin C. Fortna (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 3.
8. Jenks, *Childhood*, 66.
9. This is echoed in Karen Smith's concern that Jenks' emphasis on social orders 'tends to elide the wide variation in both strategies of control and constructions of childhood (for example by class or gender) at various points in time, as well as the significant differences to be found in individual child-rearing practices'. Karen Smith, 'Producing Governable Subjects: Images of Childhood Old and New', *Childhood* 19, no. 1 (2011), 26.
10. On education and nation-building, see Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon, eds., *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building c. 1870–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). On education and empire, and childhood and imperialism, see J.A. Mangan, ed., *'Benefits Bestowed'? Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) and Simon Sleight and Shirleene Robinson, eds., *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). On the state and parenting, see Hestor Barron and Claudia Siebrecht, eds., *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
11. Brockliss, 'Introduction', 6. See also Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon, 'General Introduction', in *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building*, ed. Brockliss and Sheldon, 1–12.
12. For somewhat differing views on the aims of the Irish education system, see Ciara Boylan, *The Life and Career of Archbishop Richard Whately: Ireland Religion and Reform* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2018); D.H. Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); Richard Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion and Reform, 1830–1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). For a reading of the content of schoolbooks from the perspective of child socialisation, see J.M. Goldstrom, *The Social Content of Education, 1808–1870: A Study of the Working-class School Reader in England and Ireland* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972).
13. Nita Kumar, 'India's Trial with Citizenship, Modernisation and Nationhood', in *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building*, ed. Brockliss and Sheldon, 283–304.

14. Ciarán O'Neill, 'Literacy and Education', in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 252.
15. See D.H. Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment*.
16. Sarah-Anne Buckley, Marnie Hay, and Riona Nic Congáil, 'Guest Editors' Introduction', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2016), 197.
17. The editors of a recent volume on parenting and the state are likewise critical of the idea of top-down power relations, pointing instead to the more complicated relationship between the state, parents and civil society. Hestor Barron and Claudia Siebrecht, 'Introduction: Raising the Nation', in *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe*, ed. Barron and Siebrecht.

PART I

Education and Learning



Concepts of Children and Childhood from an Educational Perspective 1900–1940: Context, Curriculum and Experiences

Thomas Walsh

INTRODUCTION

Concepts of children and childhood are time-specific and linked to contextual issues such as social, economic, religious, cultural and political factors.¹ In the period under review (1900–1940), and indeed for much of the twentieth century, children were viewed as passive dependents who attracted little state policy attention. Ireland was a hierarchical society with a pronounced differential between the status and role of children and adults in society. While it is argued that it was within the context of the family that the distinctive features of each childhood were shaped, enacted and experienced, schools as institutions had a profound effect on the conceptualisation of childhood for both children and parents.² This impact was accentuated by the ubiquitous role played by the

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Catholic Church both within the school system and also at a wider societal level during this era. This chapter complements our existing understanding from the era by distilling key insights of the construction of childhood during the period as evidenced by national education policy documents. While it is likely that many children experienced contented and fulfilled childhoods, extensive documentation also alludes to the fact that many children were treated poorly in their home, schools and residential institutions.³

The conceptualisation of childhood in Ireland is ever evolving. In certain eras, a number of factors coalesce to catalyse a shift in thinking regarding the position and role of children in society. One such era was the period around the achievement of political independence, and this changing conceptualisation is elucidated clearly in the primary school curriculum and associated educational literature emanating from the period. While the concept of childhood in Ireland had previously been influenced by international developments through Ireland's link with the British Empire, this impact was much reduced following independence as Ireland entered a period of isolation and insularity vis-à-vis international developments.

This chapter traces the evolution of the concept of childhood in Ireland from an educational perspective in the opening decades of the twentieth century. It draws primarily on the programmes and curricula developed to inform the education of young children in primary schools in the period from 1900 until the decades after political independence was achieved. It examines in turn the concept of childhood inherent in the *Revised Programme of Instruction* (1900) and the curricula introduced in Ireland in the 1920s following independence. For each era, an outline of the background and context for changing conceptualisations is delineated. The philosophy of each curriculum is critically examined to elucidate key insights into the concept of the child as captured in the language of curricula. A further section focuses specifically on the content of these curricula in terms of the understanding provided around the conceptualisation of childhood and children and their experience of schooling. The chapter highlights distinct differences between the conceptualisation of children evident within the primary school curriculum introduced in 1900 under British rule and the curriculum developed in the 1920s following independence. It argues that this conceptualisation of children and childhood impacted significantly on what and how children learned. Using Jenks's framework, the alteration represented a transformation in broad terms from the Apollonian concept of the child in 1900 to that of a Dionysian concept of the child from the 1920s.⁴

CONCEPTUALISATION OF CHILDHOOD 1900–1922

Background and Context

Schools throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century were arenas for power struggles at a local and national level over nationality, religion and language, a struggle in which the child was often the unwitting subject. The State wished schools to be agents of socialisation, assimilation, politicisation and reproduction while the churches sought schools to be conduits of the faith and instillers of religious loyalty and values.⁵ In the Stanley Letter of 1831 which provided the framework for establishing the national system of education, the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland (CNEI) were instructed to ‘exercise a complete control’ over the national system.⁶ This was to ensure that the system promoted cultural assimilation and political socialisation approved by the government.⁷ One way of maintaining control over the programme delivered was by initially issuing and subsequently approving the textbooks to be used in schools.⁸ This gave considerable powers to the CNEI over what was taught in schools and was seen as the counterbalance to the denominational management of schools at a local level.

Attempts to strengthen the control over the work of teachers and the content of education, as well as a desire to raise standards, led to the introduction of Payment by Results in 1872. This system provided for part of the teacher’s salary being dependent on the exam results of individual pupils. While literacy and numeracy rates improved, the experience of pupils during this era was characterised by a narrow academic focus; a disconnect between schooling and the lives of children; an emphasis on rote learning; and rigid didactic teaching for success in examinations.⁹ By the early 1890s, concerns were being expressed by a broad range of educational stakeholders in relation to the overly academic character of national education.

THE REVISED PROGRAMME OF INSTRUCTION (1900)

At primary school level, the only education available to the vast majority of students, a revolutionary new programme of instruction was developed in the late 1890s and was introduced at the turn of the century. The programme was informed by a comprehensive examination of national and international thinking and practice, the Commission on

Manual and Practical Instruction (CMPI), which reported in 1898. The CMPI report was influenced by international thinking such as the New Education movement, was based on progressive ideals and was influenced by the philosophies of Rousseau, Froebel and Pestalozzi.¹⁰

The report of the CMPI provided the framework for the *Revised Programme of Instruction* (1900).¹¹ This programme was underpinned by a child-centred philosophy and aspired that schools would be humane and interesting places for children. It sought to reduce the rigidity in the teaching and learning experience that had been introduced by the Payment by Results scheme and to broaden the curriculum. Throughout all subjects, a focus was placed on the agency of the child, on enjoyment in learning, on providing variation in the pupil's school day, on using the child's senses and physical faculties, and on developing the child's understanding and reasoning skills. The heuristic method, 'by which children are enabled to find out things for themselves, by being placed, so to speak, in the position of discoverers' was to permeate their schooling.¹² A focus on catering for individual differences was evident as it stated that it provided an adequate education for an 'average child' while 'giving a child whose intelligence is above the average opportunities of developing it to the best advantage'.¹³

In addition to English and Arithmetic, the *Revised Programme* introduced a multiplicity of new subjects to national schools, including Kindergarten, Manual Instruction, Drawing, Elementary Science, Singing, Cookery, Laundry and Physical Drill, and changed the character and content of many of the existing subjects (see Appendix 1). In English, the main purpose was 'enabling the child to express himself correctly and effectively through the medium of the language'.¹⁴ In Arithmetic, a focus was placed on calculations required in everyday life, on practical acquaintance with various measures, while 'the Teachers should endeavour to make clear to the pupils the utility of the arithmetical processes by their application to concrete objects and the ordinary affairs of business'.¹⁵

One of the main changes was the introduction of practical subjects into national schools. The main purpose of Manual and Practical Instruction was to 'train the intelligence and observation, and to produce habits of neatness, dexterity, and carefulness in the child'.¹⁶ In Object Lessons and Elementary Science, an emphasis was placed on pupils undertaking experiments, with a focus on producing 'accurate habits of thought and work, and the mere giving of information should be

subordinate to this purpose'.¹⁷ Moreover, school excursions were recommended, while school gardens and garden boxes were advocated which would 'make the schools more cheerful and attractive to the children'.¹⁸

There was a gender divide in the programme, with certain subjects seen as only suitable for boys (Advanced Manual Instruction) and others only suitable for girls (Cookery, Laundry, Needlework and Domestic Science). Cookery and Laundry Work were seen to have a practical purpose, to 'enable the average primary school girl, when she assumes to position of a housewife, to perform the ordinary culinary and washing operations that may appertain to her position'.¹⁹ In terms of optional subjects, the Commissioners urged against overpressure as the 'school should be made a pleasant place in every possible way, and the lessons should be suited to the capacities and the opportunities for acquiring knowledge possessed by the children'.²⁰

CONCEPTUALISATION OF CHILDREN IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM 1900–1922

The inclusion of a wider number of subjects and the reorientation of the focus from didactic memorisation to active discovery learning highlights the changing conceptualisation of children inherent in the programme in 1900. This provided for childhood as a distinct phase of life and reduced its emphasis as an apprenticeship for adulthood. While many of the subjects introduced could be considered vocational in nature, a major focus was placed on the process and experience of learning as well as their future utility. This changing conceptualisation was evident in the status afforded to children in the infant classes, the focus on providing humane and interesting school environments, the wide range of subjects and the heuristic methods. The abolition of Payment by Results had a profound effect on the conceptualisation and treatment of younger children in the education system, as these had often been neglected in favour of the older and more lucrative students who commanded greater reward in the examination fee structure. The emphasis on the needs and interests of the child in the 1900 programme is noteworthy, as well as the way he/she learned, especially when one notes the predominant focus on teaching and content in the preceding curriculum. This challenged the prevailing ideological position in relation to children in schools and called for a radical reorientation in terms of methodological approaches.

Contrary to the dominant philosophy at the time in relation to children, this advocated ‘development from within, not on moulding or forcing from without’.²¹

Overall, the *Revised Programme* of 1900 introduced a very different concept of the child as an individual and as a learner. Jenks proposed two ‘codes’ as a framework to conceptualise children, the Apollonian child and the Dionysian child.²² The Apollonian child was characterised by a focus on innocence and on the inherent goodness of the child, which was to be celebrated and elicited through discovery learning and sensory interactions. This was inherent within the philosophy of the 1900 curriculum which sought to enable the individual child to reveal him or herself through experience and engagement. It is arguable that the wider societal conceptualisation resonated more with the Dionysian view of the child, which was predicated on the doctrine of Original Sin and potential intrinsic evil, rather than the Apollonian conceptualisation that was inherent in the 1900 curriculum. Indeed, as will be explored later in the chapter, the Dionysian code was prevalent in the philosophy of the curricula developed and introduced in the 1920s.

As has so often been the case in Irish education, the ambitious policy developments were not accompanied by sufficient resources to support the translation of the laudable vision into a practical reality in schools. Programme implementation met with mixed results owing to its broad nature, poor resourcing and its lack of resonance with the philosophy of education and the conceptualisation of childhood of the previous programme or indeed prevalent in wider society. While no doubt certain aspects of the provisions of the *Revised Programme* were introduced and provided for a more varied school experience, much of its underpinning philosophy and its subject content did not gain traction in the school system. Subjects that required little equipment or resources (such as Drawing, Music and Needlework) were introduced on a widespread basis, while other subjects requiring particular equipment and training (such as Elementary Science, Cookery and Laundry) were not taught widely in schools.²³

Although the *Revised Programme* (1900) may not have achieved all it set out to do, it had a profound effect on challenging or even altering the dominant conceptualisation of childhood prevalent in the era. Informed by international influences, it sought to widen and enrich the position of children and childhood in Irish society through the education system. It had the effect of raising the status of children at an official

policy level and of challenging the system to place their needs and interests at the heart of educational provision. As O'Connor states, '[R]egrettably this new found enthusiasm was not to be encouraged by the New State'.²⁴

CONCEPTUALISATION OF CHILDHOOD FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE

Background and Context

National and international events from the start of the second decade of the twentieth century coalesced to underpin a period of political, social, economic and cultural flux in Ireland. The onset of World War I and the turmoil it caused across Europe affected Irish society at all levels. At a political level, both constitutional and militant avenues to secure a solution to Ireland's colonial link with the British Empire intensified during this period. Following the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War, Ireland was partitioned North and South and a twenty-six county Irish Free State was established. As in many post-colonial nations, there was a desire to build Irish nationhood following independence. The revival of the Irish language was seen as central to this aim, and for many, the language revival was seen as being as important as political freedom for Irish identity. For example, Éamon de Valera asserted in 1921 that '[I]t is my opinion that Ireland with its language and without freedom is preferable to Ireland with freedom and without its language'.²⁵ The pivotal involvement of the Gaelic League in the national struggle, particularly Pádraig Pearse who had written prolifically on his vision for the position of the Irish language within the education system, resulted in a powerful sympathy towards the Irish language revival. As the education system was perceived to be the prime agent for the decline of the Irish language in the 1800s, it was believed that schools were the rightful place for its revival, restoration and conservation.²⁶ Eoin MacNeill, the first Minister for Education, asserted that Irish education policy following independence would focus on developing Irish nationhood.²⁷ Moreover, there was an attempt by church and State to revert to a romantic and mythical Irish nation that pre-dated British occupation and the revival of the Irish language was central to this undertaking. However, the endeavour of reviving a language through the education system was an enormous task and one for which the majority of teachers

were not well equipped.²⁸ For its part, the State controlled the curriculum and was enabled to imbue the education system with the ideology of cultural nationalism. Politicians and policymakers alike viewed the education system through the prism of the Irish language revival and the building of nationhood. The approval and sanctioning of textbooks to be used in schools were undertaken by the Department of Education as these were seen as central to the curriculum delivered in schools throughout the era.²⁹

The Catholic Church had grown in power and prominence since the mid-nineteenth century, and it grew more vociferous in its resistance to State involvement and encroachment in educational matters. The strength and dominance of the Catholic Church in education were duly noted by the new political establishment in the 1920s, and there were no efforts at the structural reform of Irish education.³⁰ The Catholic Church owned and managed the vast majority of schools and oversaw the recruitment and dismissal of teachers, providing it with a very strong position in terms of the ethos pervading in schools and imbuing in children and parents a loyalty and deference to the church.³¹ As Inglis argues, the ‘Irish mother’ was the powerful ally of the church and she became a conduit of the moral and civil code from the church and school into the home.³² Indeed, this moral and civil code was so well inculcated in schools that over time, it was willingly accepted within families and there was little divergence between church teaching and secular beliefs in Irish society. The church’s vision for education as a process to shape the child and to save his/her mortal soul formed a natural fit with cultural national ideology and collectively these two ideologies dominated the educational discourse until the 1960s. The rising power of the Catholic Church was mirrored in the decline of the Protestant Churches and the Protestant school-going population, which was accentuated following independence. Whyte notes the declining voice of the Protestant community from the 1920s and the increasing acquiescence to the Catholic frame of mind that gradually permeated all aspects of Irish life.³³ In terms of childhood, the separation of Protestant and Catholic children in discrete schools that had begun in the 1800s continued and solidified in independent Ireland.

The evolving relationship between the State, the churches and the education system was further consolidated and became enshrined in the Constitution of Ireland, *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, in 1937.³⁴ This reflected Catholic social principles emanating from Canon Law and Papal Encyclicals on the rights of parents, churches, the State and the child

regarding education.³⁵ This formalised the subsidiary role of the State in relation to education and the family, a subsidiarity that impacted negatively on the position and status of children in society until contemporary times. It concretised the autonomy of the family and greatly limited the capacity for State intervention to 'exceptional circumstances, where the parents for physical or moral reasons fail in their duty towards their children'.³⁶ However, neither the State nor the Catholic Church was active in championing the primordial rights afforded to parents in the Constitution around the education of their children, and this was a role largely directed by the church on their behalf. Lynch notes that not only did the Constitution reflect Catholic social teaching but it also 'reflected deeply held traditional values about the subordinate status of children'.³⁷ Akenson further asserts that 'the outgrowing of childhood was the first step towards acquiring social status'.³⁸ Indeed, the recognition of the rights of children in the Constitution was only achieved in 2012 with the passing of the 'Children's Referendum'.

CURRICULUM REFORMS IN THE 1920s

Curriculum reforms at primary school level in 1922 (First National Programme Conference) and 1926 (Second National Programme Conference) were dominated, not unsurprisingly, by the recent attainment of political independence. The national programme conference reports in 1922 and 1926 were developed by committees generally representative of educational stakeholders. However, given the political context, many in positions of power held strong nationalist leanings.

While the Catholic Church was not formally represented on the committee developing the programme in 1922, Rev. Timothy Corcoran SJ, Professor of Education in University College Dublin from 1908 to 1942, acted as an influential external advisor to the programme development committees in the 1920s, placing 'the benefit of his advice and experience at the disposal of the Conference'.³⁹ His evidence held much sway at both national programme conferences in the 1920s and this had the effect of ensuring that Catholic ideology was inherent in the curricula of the 1920s.⁴⁰ Corcoran's views on pedagogy were extremely conservative. He advocated the need for strict authoritarian teaching and corporal punishment to combat the corrupt nature of the child, based predominantly on the Doctrine of Original Sin.⁴¹ The strict mastery of a defined body of knowledge through direct instruction and memorisation

was advocated. Corcoran scorned and castigated the progressive educationalists who celebrated the inherent innocence of the child, and he advocated a break from the philosophy of the previous curriculum that focused on the experience and activity of the child.⁴² Moreover, he warned against creativity and child initiative in education, questioning the value of the senses over direct memorisation of knowledge, asserting the need for ‘fact-knowledge and plenty of it’.⁴³ The indistinguishable nature of religious and civic education was also advocated in his writings, as was the necessity to introduce Irish in the infant classes.⁴⁴ The powerful influence of Corcoran on the programmes devised is evident in the philosophy and content of the programmes developed in the 1920s.⁴⁵

THE *NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF PRIMARY INSTRUCTION* (1922) AND THE SECOND NATIONAL PROGRAMME CONFERENCE (1926)

The *National Programme of Primary Instruction* developed by the first National Programme Conference became operational in April 1922. This report asserted that the main issues with the existing programme were the proliferation of obligatory subjects, the subordinate position afforded to the Irish language and the fact that the programme was ‘out of harmony with national ideals and requirements’.⁴⁶ This no doubt related to the absence of reference within previous programmes to the distinct culture, traditions and history of Ireland and its people. Moreover, it may also be referring to the heuristic and child-centred approaches previously advocated rather than imparting a defined bank of knowledge to the child. The programme in 1922 delineated the requirements for each subject for each class level (see Appendix 1). This involved the elimination of Drawing, Elementary Science, Cookery and Laundry, Needlework, Hygiene and Nature Study as obligatory subjects and modified the programmes in History, Geography, Singing and Drill.

While prior to 1922 the Irish language had been in an absent or subordinate position, roles were reversed in 1922 and the English language was relegated in status and prominence. This subordination is evident in the tone and tenor of the report, which emphasised European thought and culture over literature emanating from Britain.⁴⁷ It also stated that the ‘[T]he work in the Infant Standards is to be entirely in Irish’ and the Irish language was to be used as a teaching medium for subjects such as History, Geography, Singing and Physical Training.⁴⁸ Indeed,

no English was to be used in the infant classes, a move that affected 250,000 children of whom 90% spoke no Irish in their homes.⁴⁹ This went further than the provisions of the Gaelic League Plan from 1918 which looked at a more incremental approach or that of Pearse who asserted in his seminal book, *The Murder Machine*, that the language of instruction should reflect the language of the home.⁵⁰ In languages, the direct method of instruction was advanced and there was repeated reference to 'memorisation,' 'transcription' and 'write from memory'. In Mathematics, the content was largely computational and mechanical in nature. There was to be an overwhelming emphasis on the History and Geography of Ireland, and other countries were only to be referred to as they related to Ireland. The language of the programme is interesting and is framed almost exclusively in terms of the teacher and teaching as opposed to the child and learning. Overall, the programme prescribed implied a concept of the child as being a passive recipient of facts imparted by the teacher.

The first National Programme Conference also recommended compulsory school attendance from age five to fourteen as it estimated that up to half of the eligible children were absent from school on any given day. The conceptualisation of childhood is evident in the language used, '[A] child who attends school irregularly not only fails to make progress himself: he acts as a clog on the class as a whole and thus hampers the progress of his classmates'.⁵¹ This places the blame and responsibility with the child who does not or is not able to attend for his/her own lack of progress and for the progress of the class. Interestingly, it is the child as opposed to parents who is assigned this culpability. Church resistance to compulsory attendance had dissipated by the mid-1920s as it had assumed a more dominant role in the direction and delivery of education following independence. The facilitation within the attendance legislation introduced in 1926 for children over twelve years of age to be absent from school in the autumn and spring for up to ten days to facilitate work on the parents' farm provides an insight in relation to the status and position of children at the time. While their right to education was considered important, the labour they provided to parents was acknowledged and prioritised, showing the tension between parental rights to farm labour and the rights of children to an education. This is in line with Curtin's analysis in relation to the subordinate status of children during this era, with a purpose of ensuring generational continuity,

of providing a cheap source of labour and delivering security for parents into old age.⁵²

The Second National Programme Conference was instituted in 1924 by the Department of Education to consider the suitability of the 1922 programme in operation. Its overall finding was one of ‘commendation’ for the ideals set out in 1922, but it acknowledged the need for a more gradual approach through a transitional programme that would outline the steps necessary towards achieving these ideals.⁵³ Some minor changes were introduced to the list of compulsory and additional subjects from 1926 (see Appendix 1). This included allowing the use of English in the infant classes before 10.30 a.m. and after 2.00 p.m., reducing the requirements in some categories of schools for algebra and geometry and reconstituting history and geography as separate subjects. Higher and lower courses were introduced in Irish and English, with the higher course undertaken in the language in which the pupils and the teacher had most competence. This was seen as a transitional arrangement until all teachers had the capacity to teach the higher course in Irish. Overall, there was remarkable continuity in tone, philosophy and content in the curriculum revision of 1926 with that of its predecessor.

The language of the report in relation to providing free school meals and school books is interesting, noting an awareness of the ‘serious objections which may be urged against the general principle of providing free meals to school children’.⁵⁴ It recommended that a way be found to ensure that starving or underfed children were not forced to attend school as this was ‘at once cruel and educationally futile’. Arguably, this related to Catholic Church objections to State interference in what it perceived to be its social function. The programme report appears careful in not encroaching on the role carved out by the Catholic Church in the provision of social services, and little was enacted in the decades that followed in relation to supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds to access educational provisions fully by either church or state.⁵⁵ The use of schools for moral regulation or moral profit by the Catholic Church was not a phenomenon unique to the Irish context.⁵⁶

The centrality of religion in the curriculum was evidenced in the 1926 report, which stated that ‘of all parts of a school curriculum, Religious Instruction is by far the most important, as its subject-matter, God’s honour and service, includes the proper use of all man’s faculties, and affords the most powerful inducements to their proper use’.⁵⁷ The programme also provided that ‘a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school’ and that children should be ‘inculcated’ with

moral virtues such as charity, justice, truth, purity, patience, temperance and obedience. Perhaps the most informative phrase relates to the role of the teacher in the ‘moulding to perfect form of his pupil’s character’ in line with God’s laws. The language of the statement on religion is useful for an analysis of the curriculum insofar as it elucidated a certain image of the child as perceived by the Conference. The child was conceptualised as an object to be ‘moulded’ by the teacher, as opposed to building on his/her uniqueness and individuality as conceived in 1900. This very much aligned with the Dionysian view of the child as advanced by Jenks which was predicated on the stain of Adamic Original Sin that was inherent in the Christian worldview.⁵⁸ This required a closed, defined curriculum for the child’s formation to be delivered through didactic methodologies to ensure that knowledge was conveyed and assimilated. In such a situation, ‘a severe view of the child is sustained, one that saw socialisation as almost a battle but certainly a form of combat where the headstrong and stubborn subject had to be ‘broken,’ but all for their own good’.⁵⁹ In this way, there was a deep mistrust and rejection of progressive educational theories that underpinned the 1900 curriculum which aimed at eliciting the inherently perfect qualities of the child. Rather, the new programme placed a greater focus on suppressing natural instincts and moulding the child in order to overcome his/her human frailties and to prepare him/her for the next world.

CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF CHILDHOOD FROM THE 1920s

Arguably, the reforms in the 1920s led to a radical change in the philosophy, content and conceptualisation of children within the primary school curriculum. The construction of childhood was primarily influenced by the heightened sense of cultural nationalism and the doctrines and ideology of the Catholic Church in Ireland. In contrast to the concept of the child as encapsulated in the previous curriculum of 1900, this new conceptualisation of childhood required a defined curriculum to be delivered through didactical methodologies to ensure that knowledge was conveyed and assimilated, with the child as a passive recipient of factual data transmitted by the teacher. This conceptualisation was reinforced within a Catholic ideology that stressed the need for strict socialisation to combat Original Sin and human frailty, and the need for adherence to rules and regulations. This dual nationalist and Catholic social doctrine envisaged a subordinate position for children in society. Education became part of this process of normalisation, within a nationalist and

Catholic frame of reference. While class sizes were large in the 1920s and were increased by school attendance legislation, this alone does not explain the reversion in policy to direct methods of instruction as a practical solution. By this time, Catholic social norms had become so instilled within the vast majority of individuals and families in Ireland that there was little divergence between church, State or citizens in relation to the role and status of children in Ireland.

The tone and content of the programmes introduced in the 1920s moved away from the child-centred ideology and broad curriculum of 1900 and placed the restoration of the Irish language and the development of nationhood above direct pedagogical considerations. During this period, the curriculum was devised from a political, cultural, religious and nationalistic frame of reference, prioritising national aims over pedagogical concerns. As Devine states, a rigid nationalistic ideology was adopted in the Free State 'in which children were to be the mechanism through which a new Gaelic and Catholic order was to be achieved'.⁶⁰ The conceptualisation of the child was heavily influenced by the Catholic Church's influence on the pedagogic direction of the curriculum, prioritising didactic teacher-centred methods in line with Rev. Corcoran's influential advice. Interestingly, little emphasis was placed on developing the oral communicative competence of the child given the avowed aim of reviving the Irish language as a spoken language. It is arguable that this was related to the philosophy of education and the conceptualisation of childhood inherent in the programme that focused more on moulding and filling rather than nurturing the communicative capacities of the child.

Overall the programme in operation from the 1920s failed to take into account the individuality of the child in schools, the uniqueness of each learning environment or the necessity for the child to be an active agent in his/her learning. Teachers were often seen as the medium through which content and knowledge were transferred to pupils. The subordinate position of children in Ireland at this time led to an unquestioning acceptance that the needs or interests of children were subservient to national requirements.⁶¹ By prioritising religious, moral and literary instruction over a more holistic and practically oriented programme in schools, the programme failed to prepare many school leavers for inevitable careers in agriculture and service sectors both at home and abroad. The *modus operandi* of not placing children's needs at the centre of policy-making was representative of the status differentials between

children and adults and had a fundamental effect on the breadth and depth of education achieved and on children's experience of schooling in terms of both content and methodology.

CONCLUSION

The slow pace of achieving the aims of the curricula introduced in the 1920s prompted further reforms in 1934 which intensified the provisions around the Irish language and narrowed the general programme of instruction to be followed in schools (see Appendix 1).⁶² The purpose of education was further reinforced along this vein with the *Report of the Council of Education* in 1954.⁶³ It asserted a moralistic and conservative vision for the role of primary education in 1954, stating that '[T]he school exists to assist and supplement the work of parents in the rearing of their children. Their first duty is to train their children in the fear and love of God. That duty becomes the first purpose of the primary school'.⁶⁴ It was written from the perspective of a Catholic concept of childhood, stressing the limitations of the child's capacity, the limited functions of the school and the need for strict instruction of the child for preparation as a good Christian and citizen. Indeed, in tone and content, it had changed little from the reports of the First and Second National Programme Conferences in the 1920s.

One hiatus in the dominant concept of the child came in the form of the *Revised Programme for Infants* in 1948 and the accompanying *Notes for Teachers* in 1951.⁶⁵ The language used and the conceptualisation of the child conveyed within the programme contrasted greatly with the provisions within the programmes of 1922, 1926 and 1934. This returned in principle and in philosophy to the *Revised Programme* of 1900 by placing an emphasis on the needs, interests and abilities of the individual child and by advocating more active and heuristic methodologies for young children. This programme was developed by progressive inspectors (particularly Ms Eileen Irvine as Chief Organising Inspector) who had examined international practice around infant education in the 1940s.⁶⁶ While laying a foundation for future developments with the introduction of the child-centred *Primary School Curriculum* in 1971, and its revision in 1999, the programme did not gain general traction in the education system and the programmes introduced in the 1920s continued to inform education policy and practice until the late 1960s.⁶⁷

NOTES

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APPENDIX 1: COMPULSORY AND OPTIONAL SUBJECTS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM, 1900–1940s

<i>Year</i>	<i>Compulsory subjects</i>	<i>Optional/additional subjects</i>	<i>Additional notes</i>
1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Arithmetic • Kindergarten Methods • Manual Instruction • Drawing • Object Lessons and Elementary Science • Singing • School Discipline and Physical Drill • Cookery (girls) • Laundry (girls) • Needlework (girls) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French • Latin • Mathematics • Irish • Instrumental Music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English and Arithmetic were the only ‘compulsory subjects’, with all other subjects to be taught if teachers were proficient and the necessary facilities and resources were available • Geography and History were taught through Geographical and Historical Reading Books • From 1904, Manual Instruction was discontinued in the senior classes, Geography was included as a separate subject and Cookery applied to fifth and sixth classes only
1922	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion (extra-curricular) • Irish • English • Mathematics (Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry) • History and Geography • Singing • Drill • Needlework (girls) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing • Advanced Algebra • Advanced Geometry and Mensuration • French (or other continental language) • Latin • Nature Study • Book-keeping • Elementary Science • Cookery • Rural Science and School Gardening • Manual Instruction (Woodwork) • Domestic Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All work in the infant classes was to be through the medium of Irish • The work in the infant classes was classified under Language, Drawing, Numbers, Kindergarten Gifts and Occupations, Songs and Games • A veto was allowed to parents regarding the teaching of either the Irish or English language in schools • History and Geography were to be taught as one subject

(continued)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Compulsory subjects</i>	<i>Optional/additional subjects</i>	<i>Additional notes</i>
1926	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion (extra-curricular) • Irish • English • Mathematics • History • Geography • Music • Rural Science/ Nature Study • Needlework (girls) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing • Domestic Science • Physical Training • Manual Instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All work in the infant classes was to be through the medium of Irish, but allowing English to be used before 10.30 a.m. and after 2.00 p.m. • The work in the infant classes was classified under Language, Kindergarten, Songs, Games, Arithmetic and Drawing • Higher and Lower Course were introduced in Irish and English, with the aim that the Higher Course in Irish would become the norm • Algebra and Geometry (as part of Mathematics) became optional in classes taught by women teachers and in one-teacher schools • History and Geography were reconstituted as separate subjects
1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion (extra-curricular) • Irish • English • Arithmetic • History • Geography • Music • Needlework (girls) • Algebra or Geometry (large boys' schools only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English (first class) • Rural Science/ Nature Study • Domestic Science • Drawing • Physical Training • Manual Instruction • Algebra and Geometry (girls' schools and small schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All work in the infant classes was to be through the medium of Irish • No English was allowed in the infant classes, while English became an optional subject in first class • The Higher Course in Irish and the Lower Course in English was to be taught in all schools

(continued)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Compulsory subjects</i>	<i>Optional/additional subjects</i>	<i>Additional notes</i>
1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion (extra-curricular) • Irish • English • Arithmetic • History • Geography • Music • Needlework (girls) • Algebra or Geometry (large boys' schools only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English (first class) • Rural Science/ Nature Study • Domestic Science • Drawing • Physical Training • Manual Instruction, • Algebra and Geometry (girls' schools and small schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Revised Programme for Infants</i> allowed for a more child-centred and heuristic approach in the infant classes • Optional thirty minutes of English allowed each day in the infant classes

Source Adapted from Thomas Walsh, 'The National System of Education 1831–2000', in *Essays in the History of Irish Education*, ed. Brendan Walsh (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 7–43.



CHAPTER 3

The Church of Ireland's Response to Changes in the National School Curriculum in Post-independence Ireland 1922–1940

Martina Relihan

INTRODUCTION

This essay will present an analysis of the relationship between the Church of Ireland and the Irish government between 1922 and 1940 in the context of the difficulties experienced by the church in adapting to the new state's educational and curricular priorities. The state, which came into existence in 1922, regarded the pedagogical requirements of the child in the classroom as subservient to its view that the child should serve its sociopolitical agenda. This agenda centred around the gaelicization of the country which was to be achieved chiefly through the revival of the Irish language as the spoken language of the people and specifically through the pursuit of what came to be known as the 'compulsory Irish' policy in the schools. In the words of the Irish Free State's

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Minister for Education, Eoin MacNeill (1867–1945), ‘the chief function of Irish educational policy [was] to conserve and develop Irish nationality’ with education being regarded as ‘either nationality in its making or in its undoing’.¹ The Church of Ireland authorities were deeply uncomfortable with this conscious construction of the child as putative model citizen of a gaelicized Irish-speaking country. The policy compounded the church’s heavily qualified feelings of loyalty to the new state with the majority of its co-religionists living within the Northern Ireland six-county area, which remained under British jurisdiction.

This chapter will begin by outlining the dramatic curricular changes with which the government became immediately engaged as the National Board of Education that had administered the national school system since its foundation in 1831 was disbanded. It will then examine the tensions that emerged between the state and its principal religious minority as the radically altered school curriculum was implemented in the schools. The issue of the material contained in government-sanctioned school textbooks, which the church authorities deemed to be unacceptable, was one which immediately engaged their attention. The church–state interaction on this issue from the early 1920s to the 1940s will be assessed. The chapter will then focus on the impact of the ‘compulsory Irish’ policy on Church of Ireland schools in the area of the country which bordered Northern Ireland. This was the area where the majority of Church of Ireland schools were located and where church opposition to the ‘compulsory Irish’ policy was most concerted. In the remainder of the country, the church authorities faced the serious difficulty of transporting Protestant children to its widely scattered network of small schools, many of them in remote locations. The response of the state to the church’s request for assistance in dealing with an issue which it regarded as one of virtually existential importance will be assessed. Finally, the chapter will seek to analyse the impact of the establishment by the state in 1927 of Coláiste Moibhí. This Dublin-based, Church of Ireland-managed second-level college was designed to provide the Church of Ireland Training College (CITC), which trained national school teachers, with a reliable supply of fluent Irish-speaking students. As such Coláiste Moibhí could be regarded as the one initiative in the state’s Irish language policy with which the Church of Ireland seemed to at least superficially concur.

‘STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL FIBRE’ THROUGH CURRICULAR CHANGE

The first meeting of the Board of National Education following the declaration of independence for Ireland early in 1922 was a momentous one. The British government-appointed body had administered national schools in Ireland since the system's inception in 1831. The arrival of the new state's Chief Executive Officer for Irish Education, Frank Bradley, was announced. A board member subsequently recalled Bradley 'entering somewhat nervously' and in a voice 'that sounded like the rasp of an automatic pistol' informing the education commissioners that their services were no longer required.²

In his address to the Board, Bradley endeavoured to appear diplomatic noting that the advice of its members could prove useful especially in relation to the impact of new post-independence education policies on the minority Protestant population with which the members of the body were mainly associated. He then put forward his ideas on the development of Irish education in a manner which suggested scant regard for the sensibilities of this religious minority. It would be the intention of the new government 'to work with all its might for the strengthening of the national fibre by giving the language, history, music and tradition of Ireland their natural place in the life of Irish schools'.³

Within weeks of that fateful meeting, the new government indicated that loyalty to the new state was to be inculcated into schoolchildren chiefly through a very significant concentration on the teaching of the Irish language both as a school subject and as a medium of instruction. Policies which were of immediate import for schools and their pupils were introduced. A public notice which took effect on St. Patrick's Day 1922 stipulated that Irish should be taught for at least one hour per day in schools where there was a teacher competent to teach it.⁴ The impact of the stark ruling that the work of the infant classes should be conducted entirely through the medium of Irish was softened a little by the recognition that the immediate implementation of the measure would not be feasible in a large number of schools.⁵ Nonetheless, in order to give effect to its ambitious plan for the gaelicization of the school system to be achieved chiefly through a major emphasis on the teaching of the Irish language, the government was intent on placing a heavy burden on the fragile shoulders of the young children of the Irish Free State.

The government's new policy presented a vision of the child in the classroom which was decidedly at odds with the *Revised Programme of Instruction* of 1900 which had been adopted by the members of the National Board of Education just two decades before the concession of independence for Ireland. That programme was heavily influenced by the precepts of educationalists such as Froebel and Pestalozzi and included what were viewed as 'child friendly' subjects such as Drawing, Elementary Science, Cookery, Laundry, Needlework, Hygiene and Nature Study. These subjects were summarily downgraded as compulsory subjects in schools by the new state.⁶ The state had effectively commandeered the school curriculum and was pressing it into service as the lodestar of its policy to restore the Irish language as the spoken vernacular of the people. The messianic zeal with which the policy of 'compulsory Irish' was to be implemented was reflected in the remarks of schools' inspector Henry Morris in a submission to the government-appointed National Programme Conference for education in 1925:

Irish should not be a particular chunk of the school work: rather like gold dust it should pervade the whole atmosphere and gild and colour everything in the place. It should be given to pupils ... as a food for their souls, almost like a religion.⁷

It was 'a religion' with which the Church of Ireland authorities were deeply uneasy. Indeed the Irish language itself had 'Catholic' connotations for the Protestant authorities. Jones has noted some of the aspects of the language that were liable to offend Protestant sensitivities such as 'the continuous use of God's name in casual conversation' or the standard salutation 'Dia is Muire Duit' (God and Mary be with you), which Protestants viewed as 'contrary to biblical teaching' as it equated God and Mary.⁸ The appearance of such phrases in Irish language school textbooks caused immediate disquiet with the members of the Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland (henceforth the Board), which administered education policy for the church. The issue provided the Board with its first engagement with the state on its new education policy.

SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS 'NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROTESTANT BELIEFS'

While the Board's concerns around the textbook issue broadened over the course of the succeeding years to include disagreement with the Catholic nationalist version of Irish history which pervaded the history textbooks, it was the content of Irish language textbooks which became a bone of contention with the state in the early 1920s. In 1923, a specially established committee of the Board was busily scouring Irish language reading books and phrase books for examples of material which it viewed as unacceptable for presentation to its schoolchildren. The committee members subsequently met the Minister for Education, Eoin MacNeill, as the Civil War raged in Dublin. A member of the committee describes the intense security precautions in operation as the delegation passed many guards and were eventually escorted into wire cages where they found Minister MacNeill 'safe beneath the level of the ground'.⁹ Regardless of the straitened circumstances in which the meeting took place, the minister was suitably reassuring that Protestant schoolchildren would not be subjected to any material in textbooks which was in contravention of their beliefs. Nonetheless, managers of Protestant schools were exhorted by the Board to be vigilant and to watch 'the tone and tendency' of textbooks used in their schools as 'nearly all the books in the market contain phrases and teaching not in accordance with Protestant beliefs'.¹⁰ The issue was especially salient where children were 'compelled to attend schools not under Protestant management'. In such instances, the Protestant clergyman should interview the manager of the Catholic school involved with a view to ensuring that the learning material which Protestant children encountered was 'free from sectarian bias'.¹¹

While Minister MacNeill's reassurances temporarily soothed the Board's concerns, the issue was far from resolved. In 1932, the Department of Education offered a valiant if somewhat convoluted solution to the issue of the sanctioning of textbooks (not merely Irish language but all textbooks) for use in schools with the compilation of three separate lists of books: one for use in all schools, the second for use in schools where the pupils were all Catholics and the third catering for schools with exclusively Protestant pupils on roll. Any book outside of these lists could not be used in schools without special sanction from the Department of Education.¹² The state did approve books from outside

the official list for Protestant schools but the authorities were obliged to make an application for this concession on an annual basis.

As late as 1950 the Rector of Sandford Parish, Dublin, Canon Harvey, provocatively declared at a meeting of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland that school textbooks contained ‘a flood of undiluted nationalism’.¹³ Later that year the Department presented a report on the issue, conceding that there were ‘undoubtedly some grounds for grievances’ in relation to the textbooks as ‘the tone and outlook of many of them (was) undoubtedly Catholic’. The Department’s mealy-mouthed solution was its suggestion that the Synod should ‘select what is least objectionable (from their point view) or take steps to provide a suitable set of Irish readers for their own schools’.¹⁴

In fact, the exasperated Church of Ireland authorities had already resorted to publishing a history textbook for use in its schools from the early 1940s having held a public competition for such a textbook carrying a hundred guinea prize. The winning entry, *A History of Ireland*, was published in 1941 and was written by a Dublin secondary school teacher, Dora Casserley. Casserley presented a version of Irish history totally at odds with the nationalist orthodoxy then presented to schoolchildren in history textbooks. She opined that it would have been preferable for the British government to treat the 1916 Rising as ‘a childish outburst of anti-English feeling not worthy of serious consideration much less of serious punishment’.¹⁵ The textbook was widely used in Church of Ireland national schools during the 1940s and had sold 26,000 copies by 1947.

The Department of Education failed to coherently define its attitude towards the question of the sanctioning of suitable textbooks for use in Protestant schools during the early decades of the newly independent Irish state. Rather it attempted to deliver ad hoc responses to specific questions raised by the Church of Ireland authorities in relation to the issue, concentrated especially around Irish language and history textbooks. The authorities were effectively left to their own devices both in attempting to avoid material which they deemed to be unacceptable for presentation to their pupils and in attempting to provide material considered suitable in its stead.

CHASING ALL THE SCHOLARS ... ACROSS THE BORDER

The Church of Ireland authorities were also required to address the issue of the actual implementation of the ‘compulsory Irish’ policy in their schools. Protestant disquiet about the policy was most voluble in

the border counties of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal. In these areas, the Protestant population was emboldened by its relative numerical strength and the implicit threat of avoiding Irish altogether by sending their children to school in Northern Ireland. One manager of a school in County Monaghan in a communication with the Department of Education in 1926 bluntly informed the officials that the parents of the children 'will not have it' (Irish). The choice, as he saw it, was a stark one of either 'chasing all the scholars ... to some other school across the border' or 'continuing to waste time teaching Irish'.¹⁶ Another manager of a Protestant school near the town of Clones in the same county communicated with the Department of Education in no uncertain terms, reminding them that 'this is a Protestant school' and that its Irish language policy did not attract the support of a single Protestant in the area. The manager was also affronted at being on the receiving end of correspondence in Irish from the Department which he duly 'consign[ed] to the waste paper basket'.¹⁷

However, such examples of Protestant school managers confronting Department officials in such a fashion were rare and the approach of the Department also scrupulously avoided open confrontation with managers, teachers and parents on the subject. It was an approach 'predicated on a pragmatic appreciation of the position of the State's chief minority religion ... even though it was rarely articulated in such terms'.¹⁸ In 1925, a school inspector in County Monaghan who visited the school praised its 'tone and internal appearance' and 'the excellent spirit of work (which) prevails', while noting that Irish was not taught there at all. The majority of the parents had signed a memorial against the teaching of the subject with only two of the sixteen parents involved coming out in favour of it.¹⁹

The Department dealt with many such parental 'memorials' during the 1920s and 1930s in Protestant border schools and became adept at handling them. In the aforementioned County Monaghan school, when Irish had still not been introduced as a school subject a full three years after the inspector's initial report the inspector was instructed 'to confer with the manager (of the school) at the first opportunity' in order to ascertain whether 'the objection (to the teaching of Irish) is of a decided nature, and by what proportion of the parents it is shared'.²⁰ When the majority of the parents were still found to be obdurate in their opposition to the introduction of the language the inspector concluded that no further steps should be taken in relation to the matter at that stage.²¹

The conciliatory approach paid long-term dividends. In 1933, the school manager noted in a communication to the inspector that Irish was being taught for one hour per day in all standards up to fourth and would be extended 'to all additional standards each year until the full requirements were met'.²²

Inspectors were at times encouraged, as in the case of a school in Donegal in 1925, to impress upon the parents the educational advantages of a mastery of two languages and the possible disadvantage to their children 'in commercial pursuits' on leaving school when the vast majority of their contemporaries were competent in reading and writing the language.²³ The Department's approach was not an unmitigated success. The manager of a County Cavan school balked at introducing the teaching of the language into his school in 1929 citing the overwhelming hostility of parents to the idea.²⁴ An inspector's report of more than a decade later noted the poor standard of Irish and the lack of commitment from the two teachers in the school towards the teaching of the subject.²⁵

Fissures were wont to surface in the diplomatic veneer carefully maintained between Department officials, its inspectorate and school managers. One County Donegal manager of a Presbyterian school resented the probing by the inspector of parental attitudes to the language question. In a letter to the Department in 1929, he likened the behaviour of school inspectors in relation to the teaching of Irish as being akin to 'secret service agents'.²⁶ In an uncharacteristic outburst, the Department severely objected to the manager's 'unwarrantable tone' and actually threatened the withdrawal of state grants from the school unless Irish was introduced as a subject. The manager was also exhorted to 'adopt a more helpful attitude in matters of this kind' in future.²⁷

Disquiet in relation to the 'compulsory Irish' policy was not confined to the Protestant population. Groups of Catholic parents also gave vent to their opposition to the policy in the 1920s and 1930s. A group of parents in the Connemara Gaeltacht area presented their objections to the Department which centred on the use of Irish as a teaching medium. The parents regarded 'a sound English education' as a prerequisite for the majority of the pupils whose destiny was emigration.²⁸ A similar protest was organized by a group of Catholic parents in Newmarket, County Cork. The parents visited the school as a group and insisted that Irish should not be taught to their children 'whether the Government sanctioned it or not'.²⁹ However such protests tended to be sporadic and

isolated. They were clearly grounded in economic considerations, especially in relation to the impact of the policy on their children's future employment prospects in America. Protests in Protestant schools were rarely articulated in such terms.

COLÁISTE MOIBHÍ: 'FROCKS TO SHOW OF THEIR OWN MAKING, AND A STORE OF IRISH DANCES AND SONGS'

In order for the compulsory Irish policy to gain any appreciable traction in Protestant schools during the early decades of the state's existence, it was essential that the schools should have a ready supply of Protestant teachers with a sufficient competency in the language to be in a position to teach it. The establishment by the state in 1927 of Coláiste Moibhí³⁰—a Church of Ireland-managed second-level college teaching entirely through the medium of the language—constituted an essential element in the armoury of both the church and state in this regard.

Coláiste Moibhí was established along with six other Catholic-managed institutions as part of a government scheme of 'preparatory colleges'. Most of these were located at or near Gaeltacht areas (Irish-speaking areas) and were designed to provide the teacher training colleges with a reliable supply of fluent Irish-speaking students. It was envisaged that the scheme would attract a significant number of pupils from Gaeltacht areas. Obviously such a consideration did not arise with Coláiste Moibhí as there were virtually no native Irish speakers in the Protestant population.

The Coláiste Moibhí project got off to an inauspicious start. Its scheduled opening in September 1926 had to be postponed as the entrance examination for the college failed to attract sufficient candidates. The Department immediately stepped into the breach, presenting candidates for a subsequent examination with papers prepared in English. Successful candidates were then declared 'eligible exceptionally' and offered places in the college.³¹ The concession was continued by the Department until well into the 1930s with candidates for the Catholic colleges attempting the entrance examination entirely through the medium of Irish.

The teething problems of the new establishment were compounded by the difficulty of recruiting suitable Protestant Irish-speaking teaching staff. The college's first principal George Ruth was a civil servant and Irish language activist with no background in education. In an effort

to create a 'Gaelic atmosphere' in the college, noble efforts were made to recruit Irish-speaking ancillary staff. Students were perplexed by the strong Ulster (northern) Irish of the gardener 'Risteard' (Richard).³² This was unsurprising given the mixed geographical composition of the college's first intake in 1927 which comprised twenty pupils, fourteen girls and six boys, seven of whom were from Dublin.³³ The group performed creditably in the Intermediate Examination of 1929 with five obtaining honours, ten a pass grade while four failed and one girl from county Dublin was 'sent home'. The college became an exclusively female establishment from the mid-1930s with students mainly coming from farming backgrounds in counties Cork and Donegal. No Dublin students attended the college from 1937–1948.³⁴

The Catholic Archbishop of Dublin was not entirely cooperative with the new college. Coláiste Moibhí students were allowed to use the laboratory facilities at the nearby Catholic preparatory college, Colaiste Caoimhin, on condition that 'the externs' were not allowed to mix with the students of the Catholic college. This arrangement was confirmed annually by the Archbishop, as manager, until Coláiste Moibhí moved to its new premises in the Phoenix Park, Dublin in 1934.³⁵ The move to the Phoenix Park to a wing of the former Royal Hibernian Military School constituted a major upgrade for Coláiste Moibhí from its temporary premises in Glasnevin. The official opening was a grand affair attended by the then President of the Executive Council and head of Government, Éamon de Valera; the Minister for Education, Thomas Derrig; and the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. John Gregg. The government was obviously keen to extract maximum publicity from the occasion. Archbishop Gregg's speech was hardly a fulsome endorsement of the government's language policy. While he was anxious to record his profound gratitude to the authorities for establishing the college, he encouraged Church of Ireland children to study Irish 'whatever might be their private feelings ... because this was a government regulation and they could not secure posts (in teaching) without it'.³⁶

The Irish Times newspaper which had been an ardent opponent of the 'compulsory Irish' policy during the 1920s became an unlikely champion of Coláiste Moibhí in a series of articles in 1938 which it published under the headline 'The Reconcilers of the Present and the Past'. The students of the college were lauded as 'uphold(ing) the faith of their forefathers in a new spirit ... with all ideas of this faith becoming a dominating force gone ... abandoned for ever'.³⁷ The writer painted an idyllic

picture of life in the college based on his impressions as a visitor where 'in the Domestic Science kitchen some girls were making hot scones for the visitors to a hockey match. How good they looked ... These happy, clever-looking girls in their pretty uniform and with their fine carriage quickly achieve fluency in Irish'. The writer recommended a visit to the Phoenix Park in May when it is 'one huge bouquet of hawthorn, backed with beeches and the gold of the Furry Glen. The students will have frocks to show of their own making, and a store of Irish dances and songs'.³⁸ The writer applauds 'the Government of Éire' for doing 'all in its power to help the minority' while exhorting 'the superiority of a bilingual nation' and expressing the hope of finding 'the Protestant classes and masses in the forefront of the movement [of Irish-language revival]'.³⁹

There was undoubtedly some hyperbole in the depiction of Coláiste Moibhí as a Gaelic Protestant haven but the initiative did contribute significantly in forging an accommodation between the religious minority and the state's 'compulsory Irish' policy. During the decade 1927–1937 a total of 161 pupils were admitted to the college. The vast majority of these graduated to the Protestant teacher training college CITC, thus providing a significant cohort of Protestant teachers with fluency in Irish for their national schools.

'WAITING FOR THE PROTESTANT BUS': TRANSPORTING PROTESTANT CHILDREN TO THEIR NEAREST SCHOOL⁴⁰

The issue of transporting Protestant children to their nearest Protestant school was one of paramount importance for the Church of Ireland authorities during the 1920s and 1930s. Their network of some 500 national schools in the Irish Free State was, apart from those located in counties Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal which border Northern Ireland, dispersed in tiny pockets throughout the country, with roughly half of their schools catering for less than twenty pupils.⁴¹ Problems of small, unviable national schools also bedevilled the Catholic population but the Protestant schools represented 'an extreme case of the problems of the mass of national schools'.⁴² In a post-independence and partitioned Ireland, the maintenance of this network of Protestant schools was deemed essential to the very survival of the religious minority in the south of the country in an overwhelmingly Catholic environment.⁴³ The remarks of the manager of a Church of Ireland school in Timoleague,

County Cork in 1929, reflected a view that Protestant children were, through their schools, inculcated with particular qualities *vis-à-vis* the children of the majority denomination. He noted that his school was turning out children who had been taught 'to be straight, honest, truth-telling, loyal members of their church' while living in a state where 'citizens of another form of religion certainly cannot outshine them as regards the qualities of honour and truth-telling'.⁴⁴

The School Attendance Act, 1926, which placed a legal requirement on parents to ensure that children between six and fourteen years of age attend a national school, concentrated the minds of the Protestant authorities in relation to the transport issue. While children who were not living within a three-mile radius of a school of their own religious persuasion were exempt from the provisions of the Act, the Church of Ireland authorities envisaged that many Protestant children living in remote areas far from a Protestant school would be effectively required to attend a school where they would encounter 'Roman Catholic doctrine and practices which are not in accordance with [their] reformed faith'.⁴⁵

The Church Education Society, which had managed and grant-aided a network of Church of Ireland schools since its foundation in the 1830s, stepped up its efforts to salvage tiny schools no longer recognized by the State due to insufficient numbers by means of grants. This it deemed essential in order 'to keep the torch of freedom burning, where the overwhelming majority of the population are adherents of a faith which at many points is antagonistic to ours'.⁴⁶ The Society also raised the spectre of 'mixed marriages' in this context, a possibility which it 'deplored' noting that the foundation of such marriages were 'often laid by association during school life'.⁴⁷ The issue was of particular relevance given the *Ne Temere* decree of 1907 whereby the Protestant party to a 'mixed marriage' was obliged to undertake that any children born of such a marriage would be raised as Catholic.⁴⁸ As Protestants constituted less than five per cent of the population of the Irish Free State, the prospect of being unable to maintain their network of national schools represented an existential threat to the survival of their community.

By 1931, the Board of Education had quantified the problem, calculating that some 1500 Protestant children were outside reasonable walking distance of a Protestant school while some two-thirds of these could be transported to such a school at an annual cost of £7000. In the opinion of the Board, it behoved the Government 'to take a leading

part' in the subvention of any proposed transport scheme. Canon Pratt, a member of that body, writing in 1933 was unequivocal in his view of the state's role in this regard as the government had 'promised generous treatment for minorities' and would surely be anxious 'to see all its future citizens brought up on Christian lines'. He found it unthinkable 'that the Government of the Free State [would] treat in niggardly fashion the appeal of a law-abiding and deserving minority'.⁴⁹

The church authorities were actually pushing an open door with the State in relation to the provision of transport for Protestant children living in remote locations. Initially, the Department of Education provided boat services to schools on the mainland for both Catholic and Protestant children who were living on islands and some van services for those living in especially remote locations. The Department's report of 1934–1935 stated that thirty-seven such schemes were then in operation while the church authorities themselves had expended £2500 the previous year to transport some 650 children to their nearest school.

In 1934, the Department established a specific transport scheme for Protestant children. Under the terms of the scheme, the Department paid £5 per annum per child subject to an average of five children regularly availing of the service in a particular area.⁵⁰ Of the sixty-one schemes in operation for Protestant schools in 1936, thirteen were located in County Cork, eight in County Wicklow with the remainder scattered throughout the country.⁵¹ The following year the Board of Education hailed the scheme as one which 'embod(ied) the co-operation of Church and State'. The state provided one-third of the £6000 required to operate the scheme with the remainder coming from church funds.⁵² During the succeeding decade, the number of children attending schools under Church of Ireland management fell by twenty-seven per cent to just over 11,000. Nonetheless, in its report of 1947, the Board of Education graciously acknowledged that many of their schools 'owe[d] their continued existence to government support' in conveying their children to Protestant schools.⁵³

The government certainly earned a great deal of praise for itself through its operation of the transport scheme. At the time, and subsequently, it was widely lauded as an example of the Protestant minority being 'well-treated' by the government. Mescal views it as demonstrating 'a scrupulous regard for the just rights of minorities (which had) contributed to a noticeably heightened sense of social security'.⁵⁴ Akenson acknowledges that while the scheme 'relieved some of the dangers to

the religious identity of the Protestant children' it came at the cost of reinforcing Protestant schools as 'small, inadequate, one-teacher institutions'.⁵⁵ White casts some aspersions on aspects of the scheme whereby 'a little Protestant boy was collected by special bus and conveyed to a Protestant national school ... where he [would] be able to sit in class with other little Protestants and be taught his sums and his spellings by a Protestant teacher. And at three o' clock the Protestant bus [would] be waiting outside the school to bring him home again'. He also wonders whether 'the price of segregation in fatigue, in destruction of home life, as well as in expense [was] too high to pay?'.⁵⁶ But the counter-argument White poses cuts to the core of Protestant fears *vis-à-vis* the maintenance of their network of national schools. Whether 'a handful of Protestant children dispersed through all the classes of a Catholic school ... [would] ... feel themselves swamped, their identity obliterated', noting that in such a situation a Protestant child would have been 'confronted by the kind of symbols – a crucifix, a holy picture, a statue of the Sacred Heart – which (would) make him feel alien'.⁵⁷ The government's school transport scheme of 1934 met with the unadulterated approval of the Protestant authorities. The state was more than happy to be seen to treat its chief religious minority 'generously' while the Church of Ireland authorities were greatly appreciative of the state subvention which was crucial to the maintenance of its network of national schools.

CONCLUSION

Post-independence relations between the Department of Education and the Church of Ireland education authorities constituted a low-key war of attrition which gradually petered out from the 1950s onwards. The Church of Ireland was in an equivocal position politically in the newly constituted Irish Free State. The vulnerability of the Protestant position as a small minority isolated from the majority of its co-religionists in Northern Ireland provided the essential backdrop to church–state relations concerning changes to education policy. Its sense of insecurity was compounded when the state effectively commandeered the school curriculum in order to serve its state-building agenda which was heavily centred on the revival of the Irish language.

The curricular changes which the government implemented from the early 1920s fashioned the curriculum to its sociopolitical ends. The Church of Ireland authorities sought to mitigate the effect of the

emphasis on the teaching of Irish in its schools and by maintaining a watchful eye on the material in school textbooks which they deemed to be inappropriate for the pupils in their schools. Both parties actively cooperated in the establishment of the Protestant-managed second-level college, Coláiste Moibhí which from the 1930s onwards provided a reliable supply of Irish-speaking students for CITC—, the Church of Ireland's teacher training college, and ultimately for Church of Ireland national schools. The Church of Ireland authorities and the Department of Education also co-financed a school transport scheme which facilitated Protestant children to attend Protestant schools in remote locations. Tensions in relation to education policy receded in the less febrile atmosphere of the later decades of the century. Protestants developed a more relaxed accommodation with the new political dispensation while the state's approach to its 'compulsory Irish' policy became less prescriptive.

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CHAPTER 4

A Treasure-House for the Young: Free Public Libraries and the Irish Child

Máire Kennedy

INTRODUCTION

Beside a library, how poor are all the other greatest deeds of man ... There the thoughts and deeds of the most efficient men during three thousand years are accumulated, and everyone who will learn a few conventional signs – twenty-four (magic) letters – can pass at pleasure from Plato to Napoleon, from the Argonauts to the Affghans, from the proven mathematics of La Place to the mythology of Egypt, and the lyrics of Burns. Young reader! Pause steadily and look at this fact till it blaze before you.

Thomas Davis, 1845.¹

This chapter will look at how, in the first decades of the twentieth century, public libraries sought to provide a well-balanced and wide-ranging selection of books for Ireland's young readers. In the early years of the century, juvenile library use was confined to those aged eight to fourteen, but some forward-thinking librarians were considering provision for

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younger children. A sense of Irish identity was fostered, through the provision of Irish-language and Irish-themed materials, while the best of world literature was provided to broaden young minds and fire imaginations. The most progressive trends from America and Great Britain were adopted for the establishment of dedicated spaces for children to read and study, although financial considerations often stood in the way of achieving the desired objectives. This essay will discuss how, through the books and periodicals chosen and the service provided, library authorities throughout the country sought to shape the reading tastes and foster a sense of national identity and civic responsibility in its young readers, in this way moulding the child into a good citizen, educated and well read, capable of making a valuable contribution to the emerging state.

BEGINNINGS

A public library is one funded and maintained by public money, open to all irrespective of race, religion, gender or economic status. In Ireland, the idea of providing free public libraries to educate and entertain the people was advanced in the 1840s by Thomas Davis, poet, journalist, Young Irelander, and co-founder of *The Nation* newspaper. This came at a time when several initiatives were tried to provide reading matter for working men.² Davis addressed himself to the young as well as to the adult population, and in his vision free libraries would ‘promote a civilizing interest in literature’.³ In addition to books for study, he promoted poetry, narratives, romances and works of the imagination.⁴

The Public Libraries (Ireland) Act 1855 was based on the British Public Libraries and Museums Act (1850).⁵ The act allowed for rate-funded free public libraries. Local authorities were slow to adopt the act at first as funds had to be raised on the rates paid on property by local householders. A levy of one penny in the pound was payable towards the establishment of free public libraries. Any town council or municipal authority could call a public meeting of householders, and a two-thirds majority could decide to adopt the act. Thomas W. Lyster, librarian of the National Library of Ireland and advocate for free public libraries, stated in 1905: ‘All believe, I suppose, that the art of reading must be taught to every child. If so, what is youth and young woman to read! It is hard to realize the dearth of pleasant and wholesome reading for the young, in many Irish villages and countrysides. And too much of what is most easily obtainable by the young is inane, or even vicious reading.

A public library can substitute better for worse; it can provide wholesome food for mind and imagination'.⁶ Lyster went on to promote reading for little children, and the provision of 'large, well-lighted special reading-rooms full of all kinds of books suitable for children—stories, travels, history, poetry, easy books on various sciences': a new concept in the early twentieth century. He further advocated the employment of 'kind, intelligent woman-librarians' to run the children's sections.⁷ He looked to American libraries for the most advanced thinking in this area.

Cooperation with schools was an innovation in the early twentieth century, when lending schemes to primary schools were set up by some library authorities. Participation was high in Dublin city until funding constraints halted the scheme. The role of the Library Association of Ireland (Cumann na Leabharlann) in promoting services to children was critical in the first decades of the century. Established in 1904, the association was made up of the best and most progressive of Ireland's librarians across the library sector: men, and from the 1920s women, who were passionate about the value of library provision to communities in urban and rural communities. Through their journal, they promoted new ideas emerging in the USA and Great Britain, and they reported on achievements by Irish libraries, which was important in encouraging newly established library services.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In 1905, in the first issue of its journal, *An Leabharlann* (in English, *The Library*), the newly founded Library Association stated its objectives.⁸ Among its aspirations was the establishment of free public libraries in every city, town and village 'in order that a thinking people might be created, and that people might be thus enabled the better to serve the country to which they belong, and also enabled the better to advance themselves'. So, in addition to the objective of free public libraries contributing to the betterment of society through individual improvement, articulated in the Public Libraries (Ireland) Act of 1855, the association added the hope that a better-educated population would serve their country. The objectives were given in Irish and English, and the book stock should be 'of a healthy recreational character, [and] should also, place at the disposal of the inhabitants books upon every subject necessary for the improvement of the student, and books upon Ireland and everything pertaining to it'.⁹ Many of Dublin city's librarians

were members of the Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaeilge) and active participants in the 1916 Rising and War of Independence: people who were drawn to the ethos of the public library movement.¹⁰ They were library policymakers in the first four decades of the twentieth century and their interest in creating responsible citizens began with shaping children through reading and participation in music and the arts.

The Public Libraries (Ireland) Act 1855 made provision for local authorities and urban district councils to raise money on the rates for the establishment of free public libraries. In this way, the new libraries were seen as belonging to the people. The first library established under the act was in Dundalk in 1858. Dublin city opened its first two branch libraries at Thomas Street and Capel Street in 1884. From the beginning, the over-riding principle of the public libraries was to create an alternative environment to the public house and 'street corner' where working people could read and educate themselves in a comfortable space. Self-improvement and education were the guiding principles of the founding committees. In its report on the opening of the Dublin libraries in 1884, *The Nation* stated: 'We have every confidence that these libraries will in a marked degree promote mental culture among the artisans of the Irish metropolis, and we believe also that this intellectual advance cannot fail to serve the Irish national cause'.¹¹ Libraries were sited in areas of economic deprivation and they sought to serve disadvantaged populations, promoting cultural literacy, encouraging people to read and thereby to think and develop a social commitment.

The first two decades of the twentieth century saw an explosion of library building throughout Ireland, thanks to the generosity of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who provided funding for library and museum buildings.¹² They were staffed, stocked and maintained by the local authorities through the penny in the pound rate, levied for that purpose. Children were considered from an early stage and reading materials to supplement their school texts were stocked. Services to primary schools were also provided by many authorities. Selection of books was given serious thought, and as well as helping with basic literacy, the aim of libraries was to educate children to grow into good citizens. This was to be achieved through the provision of the best of world literature combined with Irish literature reflecting a child's culture and landscape. When the Rathmines Children's Library was opened in 1923, Robert Benson, chairman of the library committee, expressed the hope that the library would 'show the children that good literature was

not the prerogative of any race or country, but was world-wide'.¹³ This thinking reflected the best and most advanced at the period. From the time of Thomas Davis in the 1840s, extensive reading was considered to form the individual and have a civilising effect. In the Irish context, this was supplemented by the idea that Irish culture should be reflected in a child's reading.

However, it was not until the late 1920s and early 1930s that a county library system was established in Ireland. Library service was disproportionate across the regions: the large urban centres benefited from the penny in the pound rate to provide libraries, but in rural districts the revenue was not sufficient to provide a satisfactory service. The Local Government Act 1925 allowed for rural districts to transfer their library powers to the county council, which resulted in centralised control and a circulating book scheme.¹⁴ From the beginning, the county libraries had a strong concept of their role in the communities. In their annual reports from the first years of their existence, the libraries of Meath, Waterford, Monaghan and Laois referred to the importance of juvenile reading in their counties. Waterford's aim was to train children to read 'with a view to turning out better citizens in the future'.¹⁵ Most reports regretted the dearth of books with an Irish background for the youth of the country.¹⁶ Throughout the period of the 1920s and 1930s, this complaint continued to be voiced by librarians. Publishing for children, based primarily in Great Britain, was made up of the bestselling children's authors of the period and did not provide specifically for Irish children. This literature often projected a British imperialist view of the world, but a conscious policy of providing books that reflected Irish life sought to create a broad mix of literary experience for young readers in the early twentieth century. Irish-language publishing for children, through the state-sponsored publisher An Gúm, was still in its infancy in the 1920s. Librarians sought to influence what was published for children in Irish: they argued for more original works to be published in Irish instead of the translations of European classics, which were the mainstay of the Irish-language publishing programme.

SERVICE

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the idea of providing distinct spaces for use as children's libraries was advanced in various Irish districts. The concept of a separate children's library was based on

emerging trends in Great Britain and America where dedicated departments to serve the needs of children were attached to public libraries.¹⁷ In the beginning, the county libraries had few dedicated library buildings, and service to adults and children was provided from 'centres'. Far from being able to provide a separate space for children, these library service points were in schools, town halls or other public venues, often with restricted opening hours. However, children's needs were not forgotten and book stock was selected for juvenile readers. For example in Kildare in the late 1920s, juvenile fiction amounted to about one quarter of adult fiction holdings.¹⁸

In 1904, Dublin City Libraries commenced a lending service to primary schools.¹⁹ In the first year, loans were made to 59 schools, with more schools applying the following year. By 1909, the number of schools had risen to 70.²⁰ To implement the scheme, the city was divided into four districts, under the direction of the librarians of Thomas Street, Capel Street, Kevin Street and Charleville Mall libraries. Each school was supplied with books, a bookcase and a register to record the books borrowed. Teachers provided suggestion lists to the Libraries Committee and some teachers added books from other sources to supplement the collections. In its first year, the uptake of the scheme was good, with teachers commenting on the improvement to be seen in children's reading ability. Most books borrowed were fiction or fairy tales, while Jules Verne was the most popular author in St George's Male National School, Lower Sherrard Street.²¹ P. J. Hoey, librarian at Charleville Mall, reported 'It is only natural to expect that the lighter books will for a time at least be the most widely read, but as all the books supplied are wholesome reading every volume issued is a gain'.²² In areas where literacy levels were low due to poverty and early school leaving, such as Dublin's inner-city tenements and rural areas of the country, all reading was considered a bonus. Sensational reading matter, however, was not approved of for young minds, as articulated by T. W. Lyster in 1905.²³

Service to children, defined in this time period as aged eight to fourteen, was provided by libraries as their resources allowed. The ideal was the fitting out of a space where children could read and do homework, with a suitable stock of books and periodicals for reference and lending. In the late nineteenth century, 'the admission of persons under fifteen years of age' had been at the librarian's discretion.²⁴ In Belfast, children under fourteen were not admitted to the reference library, nor allowed to use the news and magazine rooms.²⁵ Boys' rooms were available in

some libraries to provide a reference service of books and periodicals exclusively to young males.²⁶

A separate space designated for children was an aspiration of larger urban authorities, a supervised place where children could read and study in comfort and safety. In rural areas or poorly funded authorities where a separate section could not be provided, a separate time space was allocated for service to children. The decision on the part of a local authority to provide a separate children's library was a major commitment, one that was generally not feasible with the penny in the pound rate levied for library funding. It was not until the 1920 Library Act, when the rate limitation was removed, that children's libraries could be established and maintained. The intention to provide a specially designed space for children was already being voiced in 1905 when plans for the new library at Great Brunswick (Pearse) Street, Dublin, included 'two rooms in the building for juvenile study, to be open only during hours suitable to juveniles'.²⁷ This objective was not realised for nearly two decades due to inadequate funding. A children's library was included in the plans for the extension to the Charleville Mall library in Dublin, funded by a Carnegie grant and completed in 1909, but due to funding difficulties this space was not opened. By 1913, a letter to the newspapers lamented that in the refurbished Charleville Mall library 'the rooms for the Children's Library, which have also been furnished and fitted up for a considerable period, are also closed, and the books which were formerly lent to schools for lending to the children have been recalled, and will not be available until such time as the rooms are formally opened'.²⁸

Cork city's progressive plans for children's services, which included a distinct space for a library and reading room, were interrupted during the War of Independence. The library report from Cork city for 1904 announced that the new Carnegie library would contain 'a juvenile library and reading room, entirely separated from the main library ... located ... upstairs, approached by a fine broad staircase from the vestibule'. This library would provide a lending and reference service to 'juveniles of both sexes', stating that before this time 'juvenile – or boys – rooms, have been confined to the use of males'.²⁹ This library, opened in September 1905, was razed to the ground with the burning of Cork city in 1920 and the new central library on the Grand Parade was not completed until 1930.³⁰ In the ten years from 1920 to 1930, Cork city had no central library; a temporary building in Tuckey Street was opened in September 1924. When the new Central Library was opened

in 1930, a dedicated space was once again allocated for the children's library, situated on the ground floor, off the foyer.³¹

The first dedicated children's library in Dublin was opened in Rathmines library in May 1923, at a cost of £900, half of which was funded from the Carnegie Trust.³² In a report on the opening of the library, the chairman of the Library Committee stated with pride that Rathmines had the first self-contained children's library, he noted that children's sections already existed in Belfast and Cork, but they were not 'self-contained'.³³ It was estimated that it would take £300 a year to run.³⁴ An ambitious programme of talks and storytelling was commenced at the outset. This was followed quickly by the new children's library at Pearse Street library in April 1924. The Public Libraries Committee had recommended to Dublin Corporation the opening of children's reading rooms at Pearse Street and Charleville Mall libraries in February 1922.³⁵ In 1923, advertisements appeared in the press seeking two suitable women, aged under 30, as temporary assistants to supervise the children's departments at Pearse Street and Charleville Mall libraries at a salary of £3.3s. per week.³⁶ At the same time, Róisín Walsh B.A. was appointed to supervise the new children's library at Rathmines and she brought energy and imagination to the running of the section.³⁷

Children's libraries were fitted out to appeal to young people with pictures on the walls and space to study, read and draw. They were seen as a supplement to the school room, but in contrast, the spaces encouraged a child towards reading and learning at his or her own pace and in a pleasant and gentle manner. Rathmines township's children's library, 'artistically decorated', opened on 3 May 1923, 'scarcely any room could be brighter than that in which the Rathmines children are to pursue their literary education ... there was no class-room atmosphere'.³⁸ The *Irish Independent's* photograph shows a large space with tables and chairs for study, flowers on each table and framed pictures on the walls.³⁹ The new children's library was opened at Pearse Street library on 28 April 1924.⁴⁰ It occupied a large light-filled airy space on the first floor, 'beautifully decorated, and well heated and lighted'.⁴¹ A 'special lady assistant' was employed to run the section, the children's librarians were the first women to be recruited into what later became a female-dominated service. Reference and lending services were provided, and a space with tables and chairs was available for homework.⁴² In the children's library at Pembroke, 'ugly and uncomfortable furniture was replaced; upholstered settees were provided for children who wished to sit and read by

the fire', the walls were decorated with 'three beautiful Medici prints'.⁴³ An undated contemporary report from Pearse Street states that '2,000 books [were] specially selected for juvenile use'. School children, between the ages of ten and fourteen, were encouraged to use the library 'where they will be safe and comfortable during the cold and wet evenings ... they can also work out home exercises in this room'.⁴⁴ Libraries provided a warm, quiet, safe space for children to read and study which, in many cases, could not be found in a child's home. In Dublin city, library services were concentrated in poorer areas of the city where the need was considered greatest. Overcrowding in city centre homes, and the need for children to work from an early age, reduced the possibility of a child achieving its potential through reading. Libraries sought to redress the balance.

A series of annual reports covering the first years of library service for several county libraries provide a picture of a severely under-funded service, but one of innovation and expansion within its financial limits. From the late 1920s to the late 1930s, thousands of Irish children across the country benefitted from access to free books to feed the imagination and supplement school reading. Book stock for children was relatively small, ranging from something over 1000 to 3000 or 4000 books, see Table 4.1 below. Wexford County Library Committee targeted

Table 4.1 Books issued by location

<i>Library</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Book stock</i>	<i>Child readers</i>	<i>Books issued</i>
Kildare county	1927–1928			3129 Fiction
	1928–1929			7873 Fiction
Pearse street, Dublin city	1929–1930	2846	2701	24,299
	1930–1931	3282	4879	22,416
	1936–1937			15,319
Pembroke Urban District Council	1929–1930	1240	710	15,447
Meath county	1930–1931	2419	1557	15,270
	1933	4062	3007	36,509
	1937			46,273
Waterford county	1933	2509	1316	10,044
	1938	3691		25,615
Kilkenny county	1933			13,710
Monaghan county	1933			30,540
Louth county	1937	2516		

young readers in 1930 with a policy 'to promote juvenile reading as far as possible'. Each town in the county established 'a large juvenile centre of its own' and several country schools had libraries attached to them. However, lack of funding restricted the number of schools that could participate.⁴⁵ Roscommon County Library was inaugurated in April 1930 and in its first year it provided special children's departments at some of its large centres, while at headquarters, juvenile borrowers aged from seven to sixteen were welcomed. The librarian noted 'Some of these children, before the advent of the Library, never had the pleasure of handling a story-book'.⁴⁶ County Meath established its library service in October 1930, it operated from 61 centres, of which 23 were juvenile, and a further 22 shared between adult and juvenile. In its first year of service, Meath registered 1557 children, who borrowed 15,270 books.⁴⁷ In County Laois, library headquarters was accommodated in the Old Gaol in Portlaoise, and the children's room was housed in the librarian's office. Service to children was limited to one afternoon and one morning a week.⁴⁸ County Clare's service was inaugurated in October 1931, with its headquarters in the courthouse in Ennis. It then moved to a private Georgian house where a large room was fitted up as a lending library and another furnished as a children's library.⁴⁹ In 1937, County Louth had 39 juvenile branches and 44 shared branches with adults, with a book stock of 2516 children's volumes. The librarian pointed to the demand for a children's library in the Dundalk centre 'as evidenced by the numbers of children who keep coming to enquire if they may join'.⁵⁰

ACTIVITIES

A printed leaflet was issued to mark the opening of the Rathmines children's library in 1923 which was 'free to all boys and girls of school age, who live in the Township of Rathmines'; article 10 stated: 'The room is your own, and it is hoped that you will find pleasure in using it'.⁵¹ The library was open on weekdays from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., and on Saturdays and school holidays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., with an hour closure for lunch.⁵² Service in the children's library consisted of a lending library where one book at a time could be borrowed for a two-week period, a reference library, a reading room where 'the best children's newspapers and magazines in Irish and English' could be read, and a lecture room for talks and story hours.⁵³ Talks were focussed on 'the best known authors and their works, or other subjects connected with books in the

library, and on the use of the library itself'.⁵⁴ In October 1923, the library issued a 'booklet and syllabus of talks and story hours'. The syllabus announced talks on archaeology, mythology, folklore, science, art, history and literature, showing a distinct focus on Irish themes.⁵⁵

When the children's library opened as part of the new Pembroke Urban District library in 1929, talks were specifically chosen to stimulate 'the children's imaginative sense' and 'no attempt was made to cover ground likely to have been already covered in school'. Themes included 'mythology, folk-tales, romantic history, poetry, travel, music'.⁵⁶ The library was equipped with a magic lantern and gramophone, and lectures and recitals for children were given every Thursday evening during the winter of 1929–1930.⁵⁷ Over 2000 children attended the series, which averaged 87 per lecture.⁵⁸ In October 1929, a lecture on Hawaiian stories was given by 'Padraic Colum, the Irish dramatist and story-teller ... to the children of Pembroke in the new library'.⁵⁹ Colum is best known for his books on Irish mythology, and it is interesting to note the international dimension of his talk. Music recitals were given to help foster an appreciation of music. In November 1929, Mrs. Henry, the official lecturer of the Gramophone Company, lectured on 'Music, and how to listen to it' in the children's library, and 'the experimental use of the gramophone (sic) in the work of the new children's library has been very successful, and Mrs. Henry expressed her appreciation of the intelligent way in which her lecture had been followed'.⁶⁰ Art and literary competitions were held in the library at Christmas 1929, and book prizes were awarded for drawing, poetry, essays on music and in the Irish language.⁶¹ There were a large number of participants, and Mrs. Maud Walsh, chairman of the library committee, congratulated the children on the standard of their work. The programming, distinct from schoolwork, aimed at the creation of a well-rounded individual: well read in English and Irish, and able to appreciate art and music. The life of the imagination was fostered, and children were rewarded for their participation. The creation of a 'good citizen' was the stated aim of public libraries from the beginning; knowledge was seen as a civilising force which allowed the individual to participate fully in civil society. In Dublin city, libraries were sited in the poorest areas and the socialisation of working-class children was paramount: the objective to form useful and engaged citizens.

A series of Irish-language lectures for children was initiated in the Dublin libraries in cooperation with the Gaelic League.⁶²

One Irish-language lecture given in Pembroke library in October 1930 was attended by approximately 150 children,⁶³ while another at Pearse Street library the following month attracted about 100 boys and girls.⁶⁴ The lectures at Pembroke were scheduled to take place once a month throughout the winter.⁶⁵ In the fledgling Irish state, great emphasis was placed on learning and using Irish as an everyday language. The public libraries supported the Irish language as a matter of principle, as stated in the objectives of the Library Association in 1905, and they organised events and talks to promote it among children. Library staff were required to pass an examination in Irish before being appointed; many were members of the Gaelic League and key movers in the Irish-language movement. Róisín Walsh, first children's librarian in Rathmines library, and later first chief librarian for Dublin city, lectured in Irish and English at St Mary's Training College in Belfast prior to becoming a librarian. Thomas E. Gay, librarian at Capel Street library, Patrick Stephenson, library assistant at Thomas Street and later chief librarian of Dublin city, and Patrick Fennelly, head librarian at Charleville Mall library, were members of the Gaelic League.⁶⁶

STATISTICS

The annual 'Summary of Returns' from Pearse Street Juvenile Library for 1930–1931 showed that the children's library issued 22,416 books, a slight drop from 24,299 the previous year, from a stock of 2846 volumes.⁶⁷ A further 27,935 books were issued as reference books for children in the library, totalling 50,351 books consulted or borrowed in the year. The library registered 2701 borrowers and 1891 reference tickets. By 1936–1937, the number of borrowers had risen to 4879 and the lending book stock of 3282 volumes accounted for 15,319 books issued, a drop from earlier years in the decade, possibly due to the opening of a number of new libraries in the city.⁶⁸ In its first year, the new library at Pembroke registered 710 young borrowers, the lending stock was 1240, and issues for the year amounted to 15,447.⁶⁹ In 1933 counties, Monaghan, Waterford, Meath and Kilkenny reported impressive numbers of books issued to their young readers (see Table 4.1 above).⁷⁰ Meath showed a threefold increase in book lending to children from 1930 to 1937,⁷¹ while Waterford showed a 2.5-fold increase in books issued in the same period.⁷²

BOOK SELECTION

Special care was taken with the selection of books for children. The emphasis was on pleasant and profitable reading in both fiction and non-fiction subjects, and substantial reference volumes were provided to help with schoolwork. Rathmines children's library in its reference section provided 'dictionaries, encyclopaedias, geographies and atlases, the larger volumes of poetry collections and general literature' to help children with their studies. In the reading room, 'the best children's newspapers and magazines in Irish and English' were made available.⁷³ The choice of book stock was agreed by the public libraries committees in each local authority. In Dublin city, the committee was made up of the Lord Mayor, city councillors and experts in the fields of literature and science.⁷⁴ Library staff were also expected to have a wide knowledge of current literature and to be in a position to guide readers. In 1923, children were encouraged to seek advice, 'The Librarian is there to help you, and wishes to do so. Ask her advice about books or about anything you do not understand'.⁷⁵ Entrance examinations for library staff were rigorous and demanded a good knowledge of literature, history, current affairs and arithmetic. For all Dublin Corporation clerkships, a knowledge of the history of Great Britain and Ireland and Irish language (written and oral) were essential and formed part of the examination.⁷⁶ Examinations for junior library assistants, aged 16–18, included an English essay test, an obligatory test in Irish, while French was optional.⁷⁷

Selection of books for children's libraries was not random, but carefully considered and deliberate choices were made by suitably qualified persons. In the early years of the twentieth century, books for children were mainly aimed at the older child, aged eight to fourteen, with an overlap between adolescent and adult reading. Emphasis on stories with Irish backgrounds, Irish historical fiction and mythology is apparent, but there was a shortage of these titles published for young people. Not everyone approved of the new children's libraries and their lending stock, a correspondent to the *Evening Telegraph*, in advance of the opening of the new children's library at Rathmines, feared that 'it may involve the township in vexation of spirit', as 'confiding parents will send their boys to the library to read up "Einsten's (sic) Theory" and they will go forth to the task with a threepenny shocker in their pockets. These things happen wherever children's libraries have been established'.⁷⁸

This thinking is in stark contrast to the aims of the libraries, which sought to broaden the minds and to enlighten and entertain their young readers. The objective was to create discerning readers through exposure to the broadest range of reading matter. Early catalogues and lists point to the range of books stocked for young readers, comprising classics, school and adventure stories, historical fiction and even ‘dime novels’ as feared by the Rathmines resident.⁷⁹ However, many readers point to formative and influential reading from the public libraries.⁸⁰ Not all of this reading was highbrow; many devoured school stories, Westerns, romances and adventures. In his Thomas Davis lecture of 2002, Robert Dunbar shows the strong link between early twentieth-century Irish writers and their childhood reading in the public library.⁸¹ The old Carnegie library in Cork city had a profound influence on the young Frank O’Connor (Michael O’Donovan), writer and later librarian at Pembroke library in Dublin; he recalls the treasures found there in the second decade of the twentieth century in his autobiography *An Only Child*.⁸²

From the foundation of Dublin city’s libraries in 1884, a nationalist agenda prevailed within the library committees and selection of books reflected this orientation. Stock was chosen with the aim of upholding distinctive Irish national identity as well as providing ‘the best’ of English-language literature. This resulted in a certain tension and perhaps a more conservative choice of book stock in the pre-independence period. Catalogues and lists produced by the public libraries in the early decades of the twentieth century provide evidence that fiction for young readers was made up of the popular adventure stories for boys and stories for girls produced in large numbers by Victorian writers, supplemented by Irish writers who sought inspiration in Ireland’s Celtic past.⁸³ Prolific authors, such as G. A. Henty, Jules Verne, Thomas Mayne Reid and L. T. Meade, sat side-by-side on library shelves with Standish O’Grady and W. L. O’Byrne. Established writers, such as Charles Lever, Walter Scott and W. M. Thackeray, provided entertaining reading for young readers and adults alike. When county library systems were being consolidated in the 1930s, a constant refrain from county librarians was ‘the dearth of suitable adventure books for children from 10 to 16’ and school books with an Irish background.⁸⁴ Given the constant complaints about the lack of Irish-themed fiction for young readers, this deficit was made up by lecture programmes run in many libraries.

Our knowledge of library stock for children in the first decades of the century is derived from printed catalogues. Printed catalogues were short

lived as they were expensive to produce and they could not be updated; they were succeeded by card and other catalogues. Two catalogues of fiction stock were issued by Capel Street library in the early century. The main catalogue covered the years 1884, the year of the library's establishment, to 1902.⁸⁵ A supplementary fiction catalogue covering the years 1903–1915 was compiled by the librarian, Thomas E. Gay, and listed additions to stock.⁸⁶ Children's libraries and reading rooms were not distinct from the adult library at this stage, and children's titles can be found interspersed with the adult stock. It can be difficult to draw a definite line between books intended for young or adolescent readers and adults. Many titles had an appeal across age categories and reading abilities. Some authors wrote for adults and children, or books originally written for adults were sometimes embraced by children. The tables below show the authors whose books were available to adolescent girls and boys in Capel Street library in the early twentieth century, although the catalogues do not indicate any distinct readership. Capel Street served the north inner city of Dublin, which had a high density of tenements, where poverty and disease were rife. The book selection was geared towards improving the child's prospects in life through reading and literature. The catalogues represent Irish and international authors writing in English whose books had proved popular with young readers. Well represented are the canonical works of Western culture which were available to advanced readers. The range of authors available in Capel Street reflected many of those read by the common reader, as defined by Jonathan Rose,⁸⁷ authors such as Dickens, Thackeray, Stevenson and Twain, were not just read by an elite but represented a staple of working-class reading. Popular titles, with good stories and characters and a wide vocabulary, were selected to encourage the child's reading, to inspire a love of literature and to appreciate the works of international and Irish authors. While most of the fiction titles were in English, Jules Verne's *L'Île Mystérieuse*, in three separate parts, and *Le Secret de l'Île* were available in French. Verne's popularity in English translation is evident from all catalogues and lists consulted (Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

The younger child was not specifically provided for, but books of folk and fairy tales appealed to a wide spectrum of readers and could also be appreciated by a younger age group. Irish and international folk and fairy tales occur widely in the catalogues, and where there is evidence of borrowing, fairy tales top the list of books borrowed. Hans Andersen, the brothers Grimm, Andrew Lang's Blue, Green, Red

Table 4.2 Fiction suitable for girls in Capel Street Library (numbers refer to titles held)

<i>Author</i>	<i>1884–1902 catalogue</i>	<i>1903–1915 catalogue</i>
L. T. Meade	13	33
Katherine Tynan	8	19
Frances Hodgson Burnett	21	1
Rosa Mulholland	9	10
Charlotte Yonge	16	
R. D. Blackmore	13	
Maria Edgeworth	10	
Louisa May Alcott	8	
Jane Austen	5	
Anne Brontë	1	
Charlotte Brontë	4	
Emily Brontë	1	
Mrs. Molesworth	4	
Lady Morgan	3	
E. Nesbit		2
Lewis Carroll	2	

and Yellow fairy books were stocked, in addition to books of Scottish, English and Danish folk and fairy tales, and Icelandic sagas. Irish folk tales are well represented with W. B. Yeats, Samuel Ferguson, Edmund Leamy and Thomas Crofton Croker, looking to Ireland's mythological past for inspiration.⁸⁸ The emphasis of lectures for children was also on the mythology and early history of Ireland. Some of the larger libraries organised series of lectures for the winter months, which focussed on archaeology, mythology, folklore, science, art, history, literature, music and the Irish language.

A catalogue of the stock of Shankill library, Co. Dublin, issued in 1917 includes a separate list of 85 titles for children.⁸⁹ The selection echoes that from Capel Street. Titles include *Little Women* and *Little Wives* (Louisa May Alcott), *Betty Trevor* (Mrs. Vaisey); books by L. T. Meade, Mrs. Molesworth and Rosa Mulholland; adventures such as *The Last of the Mohicans* (James Fenimore Cooper), *Robinson Crusoe* (Daniel Defoe) and *Two Years Before the Mast* (Richard Henry Dana); books by R. M. Ballantyne, G. A. Henty and Jules Verne; fairy tales of Hans Andersen, the Grimm brothers and W. B. Yeats; and *Sandford and Merton* (Thomas Day), *At the Back of the North Wind* (George MacDonald), *The Treasure Seekers* (E. Nesbit) and

Table 4.3 Fiction suitable for boys in Capel Street Library (numbers refer to titles held)

<i>Author</i>	<i>1884–1902 catalogue</i>	<i>1903–1915 catalogue</i>
G. A. Henty	65	7
Jules Verne	41	3
Captain Mayne Reid	36	5
Charles Lever	28	
James Fenimore Cooper	26	
Charles Dickens	22	2
George Manville Fenn	22	2
R. M. Ballantyne	22	
William Henry Giles Kingston	21	2
Captain Marryat	20	1
Alexander Dumas	18	2
Robert Louis Stevenson	17	2
Mark Twain	14	
Rudyard Kipling	11	4
H. G. Wells	10	8
Standish O'Grady	9	
Charles Kingsley	7	1
Samuel Lover	4	
Talbot Baines Reed	4	
Thomas Hughes	2	

The Children of Kings (W. L. O'Byrne). Here, we find a small collection of well-established authors approved for boys and girls. Irish fiction and fairy tales are included with international authors.

An undated list of books from the Dublin School Libraries Scheme, administered by Kevin Street library, shows a strong emphasis on fairy tales and classics.⁹⁰ *Fairy Tales* of Hans Andersen, the brothers Grimm, Crofton Croker and *Fables* of Aesop; A. M. Sullivan's *Story of Ireland* and novels by Samuel Lover, Rosa Mulholland, L. T. Meade, Lewis Carroll, Charles Dickens, Standish O'Grady, Jules Verne, R. M. Ballantyne, William Carleton, Gerald Griffin, C. J. Kickham, Charles Lever, R. L. Stevenson and J. S. Wyss show a mix of international and Irish classics.⁹¹ The list shows that many of the titles were popular across different schools, for example Andersen's *Fairy Tales* was available to students in St Andrew's school, Brunswick Street, a school in Pembroke Street and St Kevin's, Blackpitts.

Reports from Irish libraries in the first half of the twentieth century all point to the preference of adult and child readers for borrowing fiction titles, and some estimates put this at two-thirds of stock loaned.⁹² This trend is also observed in library returns from Great Britain from the late nineteenth century.⁹³ Growing up in Cork in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the writer Frank O'Connor showed a 'strong preference for school stories and above all for the penny weeklies, the *Gem* and the *Magnet*'.⁹⁴ Once he reached 14 years old, he began to haunt the newsroom at the Carnegie Library seeking 'a new issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Spectator*, *The New Statesman*, or *The Studio*'.⁹⁵

Non-fiction stock was purchased to supplement school texts, but schoolbooks themselves were not purchased. Children's non-fiction stock was strong on poetry, history, biography, travel, nature studies, science and folklore, and this emphasis was echoed in the subject matter of lectures given in libraries. A list of books aimed at students and teachers was issued by Cork County Council in 1930 in which non-fiction books 'which have been very much in demand' have been listed.⁹⁶ The list was compiled by county librarian Donal Cronin and details the reference stock, with an emphasis on history, natural studies and literature. Local history has a prominent place, with Cronin noting that 'I have endeavoured to make the Irish and Local History Sections as complete as possible'.⁹⁷ Local studies continues to be one of the most important sections of today's Irish libraries, each county seeks to be comprehensive for its own area, resulting in unsurpassed local collections in each county. The nationalist periodical *Our Boys*, a 'fortnightly magazine for the youth of Ireland' published by The Educational Company, was advertised in a full-page spread in this catalogue, indicating its target audience of schools and libraries. The decade of the 1930s in the newly independent Ireland was one of modernisation in spite of bad economic conditions. It was a period of technological advance with the building of the Shannon hydroelectric power station. The development of international aviation led to the beginning of a transatlantic service based in Foynes, County Limerick. In its report from 1933, Laois County Library, perhaps exemplifying this spirit of technological innovation, referred to the difficulty of providing 'sufficient books on aeronautics for the children'.⁹⁸

The Irish language was promoted through the public libraries from the early years of the twentieth century through talks organised in cooperation with the Gaelic League. The provision of books and magazines was more difficult due to a scarcity of titles in the pre-independence period.

Textbooks, grammars and dictionaries were most readily available, one example for younger children was *Ceachta Beaga Gaedhilge, Irish Reading Lessons* by Nora Borthwick, with illustrations by Jack B. Yeats, published in 1902.⁹⁹ Charles Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, translated into Irish by P. A. Dineen as *Duan na Nodlag*, was available for borrowing at Capel Street library before 1915.¹⁰⁰ One of the first tasks of the new independent government was to establish an Irish-language publishing company. An Gúm, the official government publisher, began to produce Irish-language titles for adults and children from 1926 and all titles were purchased for the public libraries. A catalogue of all Irish-language titles published from 1926 shows a range of European- and English-language classics translated into Irish as well as original titles.¹⁰¹ A series of 250 translations of European classics was published, and many of these titles were suitable for children. The 1930s saw a flowering of these translations for children, starting with *Kidnapped, Monarch the Big Bear* by Ernest Thompson Seton and *Mother Goose Nursery Tales* in 1931. Before the end of the decade translations of books by Jack London, Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Dickens, Captain Marryat, Hans Andersen, the brothers Grimm, Standish O'Grady, Captain Mayne Reid, Jonathan Swift, Erich Kastner, Jules Verne, J. M. Barrie and R. M. Ballantyne had appeared. However, by 1934 the Library Association was taking issue with An Gúm about the prevalence of translations in its Irish-language list and recommended a concentration on original works in Irish.¹⁰² Librarians regretted the absence of simple stories in Irish for children, but praised the new two-penny series of illustrated Irish stories and fairy tales published by An Gúm.¹⁰³ They also pointed to a 'dearth of reading material in Irish for boys and girls from ten to sixteen'. This was not just a language issue: they went on to note 'that it is the lament of every librarian that this same dearth exists in English, and that it would be wise to fill this void with Irish books first'.¹⁰⁴ The librarian of County Meath reported that 'all available books written in Irish are stocked'.¹⁰⁵ In the annual report for 1933 from Kilkenny, the county librarian noted that the quality of reading in schools had improved and there was a much bigger demand for books in Irish.¹⁰⁶ In 1934, County Cork issued 3196 books in Irish, and once again drew attention to the 'dearth of literature with a national background for our young people'.¹⁰⁷ Reading the Irish language was seen as a cornerstone of national identity in pre- and post-independent Ireland and libraries sought to provide all available Irish material to foster this aim.

The organisation of lectures and activities in the Irish language for adults and children contributed to the construction of Irish children as citizens worthy of the new state.

CONCLUSION

During the period under consideration, from 1910 to 1940, a critical time when free public libraries were developing within the new and emerging Irish state, the importance of library services for children was acknowledged as a core element of the service. Parallel to the development of free public libraries was the newly founded Library Association, the professional association for library staff, which drew up the intellectual framework in which the libraries operated. Many of these librarians had a strong belief in Ireland's distinct cultural identity, as shown by their involvement with the independence and Irish-language movements. They were committed to providing a quality service to children from different economic and cultural environments, thus giving each child the opportunity for self-advancement irrespective of economic status. Restricted by funding issues libraries nevertheless sought to provide a book lending service to primary schools and from branch libraries or library centres. Children who had no possibility of owning books were enabled to read widely and to attend lectures and music recitals in their local library. Above all, the libraries sought to provide a warm, comfortable, safe environment in which children were free to educate and entertain themselves.

The ethos of public libraries in Ireland, as elsewhere, was of self-improvement, but in the Irish context there was the additional objective of fostering cultural identity through reading. Books chosen for lending and reference in children's libraries constituted 'wholesome reading' which would educate and entertain and help to create good citizens: well read, hard-working, sober, moral, politically and socially engaged. This ideal was articulated from the early years of library service in Ireland. Creating a national consciousness and the realisation of a distinctive Irish identity was a cornerstone of library policy. Use of the Irish language was a major part of promoting the idea of Irish cultural identity and libraries stocked all Irish-language books available and lobbied for the publication of original works as well as translations of European classics. Simple texts in Irish for children were also demanded. However, they rejected a narrow exclusivity, a representative collection of canonical works, the best of

English-language literature, was present in all libraries and children were encouraged to stretch the boundaries of their reading.

In the early twentieth century, library committees were made up of prominent and committed writers and literary men and women who guided the public libraries in the early years of their existence. Library systems first employed women in the early 1920s when female assistants were appointed to supervise the newly established children's libraries. They were well-educated young women who were expected to offer guidance and help to children in their reading choices. The objective of juvenile libraries was to support school studies and to supplement those studies with a rich diet to feed the imagination and promote a literary mind. In order to create rounded individuals and to broaden children's cultural outlook, music and art formed part of this diet, recitals and lectures supplemented the books and magazines on various subjects. Irish language, history, folklore and mythology formed a major strand of the lecture programmes, but science was also an important theme. Furthermore, by allowing children to choose their reading matter from a stock of 2000 or more well-selected books they were exposing them to the best of Irish and international writing, developing their critical faculties and honing their appreciation of literature.

While the aim of the library committees was to provide the best of literature for the improvement and entertainment of children, in practice many of the popular authors were also available for children to borrow and read. Much of the juvenile literature provided by the public libraries in the early twentieth century was published in London and was made up of the bestselling children's authors of the period. This literature often projected a British imperialist view of the world, but a conscious policy of providing books that reflected Irish life sought to create a broad mix of literary experience for early twentieth-century Irish youth. The lack of suitable books with an Irish background in both Irish and English, however, was a cause of frustration to many county librarians, who raised the issue repeatedly in their annual reports. Providing books for the ten to sixteen age group caused the most problems and was a constant source of complaint from librarians.

The role of the free public libraries in the construction of the child at this key period of Irish history is compelling. By the early twentieth century, public libraries began to see the future of the country as residing in its children. A spirit of national self-determination and Irish cultural identity prevailed, and library provision for the Irish child was focussed

on encouraging this path to nationhood. The objective was the creation of good citizens with a deep understanding of and pride in their national culture and the ability to contribute in a meaningful way to the new Ireland.

NOTES

1. Thomas Davis, 'Study', *The Nation*, February 8, 1845, reprinted in Thomas Davis, *Literary and Historical Essays* (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1846), 14. Quoted in Tomás Ó Sionnaigh, 'Thomas Davis and Libraries', *An Leabharlann, the Journal of Cumann na Leabharlann* 1, no. 1 (January 1905): 8–11.
2. Throughout the nineteenth century, partly as a result of the establishment of the National School System in 1831, a reading public was developing among poorer artisans and workers. These working men and women did not have access to university or diocesan libraries. Commercial libraries and parish libraries provided some reading matter, and libraries were opened as part of temperance societies, mechanics' institutes and repeal clubs.
3. Ó Sionnaigh, 'Thomas Davis and Libraries', 9.
4. Ó Sionnaigh, 'Thomas Davis and Libraries', 11.
5. 18 and 19 Victoria C, 40 (1855).
6. Thomas W. Lyster, 'Ireland and Public Libraries', in *An Leabharlann* 1, no. 1 (January 1905): 15–24.
7. Lyster, 'Ireland and Public Libraries', 22–23.
8. Henry Dixon, 'Our Objects', in *An Leabharlann* 1, no. 1 (January 1905): 1–3.
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PART II

Literature and Language



Drama for Children in the Irish Free State: Sinéad De Valera's Plays for Schoolchildren

Kate Harvey

This essay considers the role of drama in education in the context of the Irish Free State. Although no professional theatre companies catering exclusively for children would exist in Ireland for another half-century, there was nevertheless in this period a recognition of the value of drama in the education of young people, as evidenced by the large body of plays written for performance in schools. These plays provided a creative means for Irish children to explore their nation's political and cultural history through drama, often through the Irish language.¹ This essay focuses primarily on one of the most prolific writers of these school plays, Sinéad De Valera, who began writing for children after her husband Éamon became President of the Executive Council in 1932.² De Valera³ had been an Irish teacher and member of the Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaeilge) and the Daughters of Erin (Inghinidhe na hÉireann, which would later merge with the Cumann na mBan); her plays for schoolchildren are in line with a national educational policy that placed a significant emphasis on Irish heritage and the Irish language. All of them are set in Ireland, and many draw on Irish history and folklore for their

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content.⁴ Others adapt English and European stories to an Irish context, as in the plays *An tSean-Bhean a Bhí ina Comhnuidhe i mBróig* [The Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe] (1939), *Cochaillín Dearg agus an Mactíre* [Red Riding Hood and the Wolf] (1940) and *Féasóg Gorm i nÉirinn* [Bluebeard in Ireland] (1943), as well as two new fairy tales set in Ireland and loosely based on familiar stories: *Buaighirt agus Bród* [Work and Play] (1934) and *Na Buidéil Draoidheachta* [The Magic Bottles] (1935). De Valera also wrote two original plays set in contemporary Ireland, *Teach in Airde* and *Lá Bealtaine*, both of which would later enjoy English translations as *A House to Let* and *May Day*. This essay begins by contextualising De Valera's plays in terms of their relationship with various modes of performance available to children in the 1930s, as well as in terms of the educational priorities of the newly formed Irish Free State. It then goes on to consider the creative and dramatic potential of the plays themselves, focusing primarily on those mentioned above that adapt familiar European stories to an Irish context. While it is true that De Valera's plays are overtly patriotic and in line with contemporary educational policy in content, this essay demonstrates that they are more than merely vehicles for nationalist indoctrination. De Valera's innovative approach to drama as an educative tool and her appreciation for children's creative potential suggests a more nuanced and, to some extent, progressive conception of childhood than that constructed by the Free State's educational policy.

PERFORMANCE, NATIONALISM AND THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Children were seen as an important battleground by early twentieth-century nationalist organisations like the Gaelic League; indeed, in the rhetoric of the Gaelic Revival it was commonplace to equate childhood with the Irish nation.⁵ In her study of the Irish Fireside Club (IFC), Róna Nic Congáil argues:

By the turn of the twentieth century, the child had thus become the focus as principal receptacle and potential transmitter of the Gaelic League's cultural nationalist ideology and the league began to invest much of its resources in the promotion of a child-centred nationalist education, to be administered by the educational boards and the Gaelic League itself in the public sphere and by the parent (generally the mother) in the private sphere.⁶

The IFC, an offshoot of the Gaelic League, was ‘a mass child-driven movement that would later supply the Gaelic League with several young language enthusiasts who would play crucial roles in the new Ireland of the twentieth century’,⁷ including Éamon De Valera. Sinéad De Valera was herself a member of the Daughters of Erin, the nationalist women’s organisation led by Maud Gonne, as well as the Gaelic League. She learned and later taught Irish in classes offered by the League, meeting Éamon in an Irish class she was teaching. The Irish language was central to the Revivalists’ project of replacing British cultural institutions with Irish ones. In his oft-quoted 1892 address to the Irish National Literary Society on ‘The Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland’, Douglas Hyde asserted:

I have no hesitation at all in saying that every Irish-feeling Irishman, who hates the reproach of West-Britonism, should set himself to encourage the efforts, which are being made to keep alive our once great national tongue. The losing of it is our greatest blow, and the sorest stroke that the rapid Anglicisation of Ireland has inflicted upon us. In order to de-Anglicise ourselves we must at once arrest the decay of the language.⁸

The Revivalists’ use of performance ‘to educate individuals in how best to embody and project their Irish identity’ has been well documented by scholars of modern Irish theatre,⁹ as has the occasion of Queen Victoria’s state visit to Ireland in 1900, in which rival events competed for the attention of Dublin’s children:

[W]hen Queen Victoria visited Ireland in 1900 she sponsored a ‘Children’s Treat’ in the Phoenix Park to generate support for the Boer War. In response to this event, a procession of roughly 20,000 children, waving flags and singing patriotic songs, marched to Dublin’s Clontarf Park, where they played Irish games and listened to anti-imperial speeches from figures including Maud Gonne.¹⁰

Kirwan-Keane suggests that De Valera herself may even have been involved in the latter event, as it was organised by the Daughters of Erin at a time when she was an active member.¹¹

In the early twentieth century, children’s theatre did not exist in any formalised way, as it would later in the century following the children’s theatre movement of the 1960s. In other words, there were no dedicated

companies designed to cater to the needs and/or tastes of young people at specific developmental stages, nor was there a great deal of recognition from professional theatres of children as a demographic within their audiences. There were, however, certain popular modes of performance aimed at family audiences, which did recognise that their audiences would include children even if the performances were not necessarily devised with them in mind. According to Karen Vandeveld, the annual Christmas pantomimes staged by Dublin's Gaeity Theatre and Theatre Royal beginning in the late nineteenth century 'were the first theatre entertainments that recognised children as target members of the audience. As such, they catered for a section of society that was generally overlooked by the entertainment industry'.¹² These were Dublin-centric productions, aimed at upper- and middle-class families. In addition to the officially sanctioned pantomimes, the many forms of informal public performance staged by nationalist organisations such as the Gaelic League were often attended by and addressed to Irish family audiences and were seen as an important part of the Gaelic cultural revival. As a form of entertainment derived from a British cultural tradition, the pantomimes were seen by the Gaelic Leaguers as a prime example of the 'West Britonism' they were consciously rejecting. As such, they sought alternative modes of performance designed to reach ordinary Irish families, celebrating Irish language and culture through performance and spectacle on a local or community level; as Nic Congáil observes, '*Tableaux vivants*, dramatic productions, and the local *feis* (festival) and *aeríocht* (open-air entertainment) were used in conjunction with Irish-language classes as a means of promoting cultural nationalism among adults and children alike'.¹³ This most often took the form of festivals aimed at celebrating Irish culture and traditions through games, music and dance (in the form of *ceilís*), recitals and tableaux; many of which were devised and presented by the Daughters of Erin. As many critics have noted, these early festivals, held in town centres across Ireland, would heavily inform the Gaelic revival that would take place in the Dublin theatres in both form and content.¹⁴ Vandeveld singles out the *tableaux vivants*, in which costumed performers represent scenes through silent poses, as an especially potent means of adapting English dramatic forms to suit Irish agendas:

In this type of entertainment, originally associated with music halls or costume entertainments, actors would adopt the poses of figures in well-known paintings. The Daughters of Erin departed from the custom by presenting subjects taken from Irish legends. [...] In establishing a

continuum between the mythical Irish past and the present-day revival, these tableaux erased the centuries of British rule and made a case for serious revisions in the textbooks of national history.¹⁵

In the Daughters of Erin productions, the tableaux were interspersed with ideologically infused explanatory speeches. Vandeveldt further argues that ‘the entire ceilidh setting illustrates an experiment with the boundaries of drama. Traditional cultural practices such as singing, dancing and storytelling were recognised for their dramatic value and presented as an alternative to the model of English or classical drama’.¹⁶ Whether or not De Valera was, as Kirwan-Keane suggests, actively involved in these *tableaux vivants*, she certainly draws on these forms of entertainment in her plays for young people. In addition to their often overt nationalism, De Valera’s plays make repeated use of the *tableau vivant* in their staging, as well as using music and dance to link scenes. Ironically, however, her plays were primarily performed by pupils at fee-paying Dublin schools attended by middle-class children, such as the Catholic University School and the Loreto Colleges; in other words, probably the same families that formed the target audience for the ‘West British’ entertainments the nationalist movement rejected.

An illustrative example of the influence of the Daughters of Erin productions on De Valera’s work is the final scene of *Oilibhéar Beannaithe Ploingcéad* [Blessed Oliver Plunkett], which is also probably her most overtly nationalistic play. Each of the first three scenes in the play represents a different episode in Plunkett’s life, set in 1647, 1678 and 1681, already echoing the format of the *tableaux vivants* by showing historical or mythological episodes interspersed with other types of performance. The fourth and final scene is very short and presents Plunkett’s execution and martyrdom. The stage directions read, ‘*The year 1681, Tyburn. A crowd of people, women and men, standing on the stage. Curtain at the back of the stage. The company singing this song*’.¹⁷ After the song, the curtain at the back is parted to reveal Oilibhéar standing on a platform at the back of the stage,¹⁸ and he gives a speech in which he asserts his innocence and forgives his enemies. The curtain goes down on his final prayer, delivered in both Latin and Irish. The other people on the stage are here situated as spectators rather than participants in the action and the scene serves no narrative purpose (we do not even get to see Plunkett’s martyrdom as the curtain comes down before he is actually executed). The scene is there purely for its visual impact, which is heightened by the dramatic reveal of Plunkett after the musical number.

Like Irish theatre, Irish educational policy in the early twentieth century was strongly influenced by the cultural nationalism of the Gaelic League, in which, as discussed above, both Sinéad and Éamon De Valera were involved in their respective youths. While it is not my intention here to suggest that Sinéad De Valera's relevance as an author and dramatist is dependent on her husband's political career, in this case some discussion of Éamon De Valera's political aims and achievements is necessary as her plays for young people and his vision for the nation in general and its children in particular are in continual dialogue with each other. Indeed, it is impossible to separate the purpose and content of her plays, or the circumstances under which they were performed, from the priorities of her husband's government's educational reforms. Reforms to the primary curriculum under the Fianna Fáil government of 1932–1948 focused almost exclusively on the restoration of the Irish language; since 1922, when the Free State government officially took over the administration of national education, Irish had been required to be 'taught, or used as a medium of instruction, for not less than one full hour each day in all national schools where there is a Teacher competent to teach it'.¹⁹ In 1925, in response to criticism from teachers that teaching through Irish necessarily lowered the standard of instruction, 'the requirements in mathematics, history and geography were reduced to take account of the demands of teaching through the medium of Irish'.²⁰ In 1934, the requirements in mathematics were further reduced, Rural Science was eliminated altogether as a subject, and a 'less ambitious scope' in English was adopted in the hope that this would 'make for more rapid progress and more effective work in the teaching of Irish and in the development of teaching through Irish'.²¹ The only mention of drama in the revised curricula is nevertheless telling in that it is mentioned in relation to Irish-language learning: according to the circular sent to schools in 1922, 'Reading in Irish should be of a wide and varied type, covering all forms of literature, including Poetry and Drama', with continental European literature in translation favoured over English or even Anglo-Irish literature.²² Minister for Education Tomás Ó Deirg essentially put into practice Hyde's insistence forty years earlier 'that the Irish language, which so many foreign scholars of the first calibre find so worthy of study, shall be placed on a par with—or even above—Greek, Latin, and modern languages, in all examinations held under the Irish Government'.²³ Creating future

nationalists through instruction in Irish language, history and culture was the government's primary educational aim, and these components are brought together in De Valera's plays, in terms of both form and content. They were all initially written in Irish, although she later published English translations of three of them, and they were frequently printed using a *seanchló*, or old typeface.²⁴ A 1935 review in *The Irish Schools Weekly* of two of De Valera's plays notes the educative potential of performing plays in Irish; the reviewer observes, 'Informed opinion is that there is no better way to encourage children to speak another language than to encourage them to rehearse and produce plays in that language'.²⁵ Additionally, all of the plays either directly or indirectly deal with Irish subject matter and, like the *tableaux vivants* popular during the Revival, their content aims to educate its participants as well as its audience on Irish history and culture. The remainder of this essay will focus on De Valera's plays that draw upon Irish myths and legends and/or adapt European stories to Irish contexts.

THE INFLUENCE OF IRISH AND EUROPEAN FOLK TRADITIONS

'Bluebeard' is perhaps an odd choice of a fairy tale to adapt for performance by schoolchildren, given its subject matter and potential staging difficulties of the key sequence discussed below, in which the bodies of the title character's previous wives are discovered. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm cut the tale from the second edition of their *Nursery and Household Tales*, ostensibly because of its close resemblance to Perrault's 'Barbe Bleu'.²⁶ De Valera's choice of title is likewise curious: it is specifically Bluebeard *in Ireland*, prompting the question of what, apart from the language, marks out De Valera's version as a specifically Irish 'Bluebeard'. In its plot and structure, De Valera's *Féasóg Gorm i nÉirinn* is a fairly straightforward retelling of Perrault's tale, but with some crucial differences. The first of three scenes takes place at the marriage celebration of Féasóg Gorm and Faitiama (the wife is not given a name in Perrault or Grimm's versions), and in the first scene, Féasóg Gorm is called away and leaves Faitiama the keys to his castle, warning her not to enter the room with the black door. In the second, wordless, scene, Faitiama opens the door and discovers the corpses of his former wives. In the third, Féasóg Gorm returns and discovers the tell-tale bloody key, despite Faitiama's efforts to hide it. He sends for an executioner,

but she is rescued at the last minute by the arrival of her brothers, who kill Féasóg Gorm. Perrault's version offers two morals, the first warning of the dangers of female curiosity and the second chiding modern husbands for not mastering their wives,²⁷ and Tatar notes that '[n]early every nineteenth-century printed version of "Bluebeard" singles out the heroine's curiosity as an especially undesirable trait'.²⁸ In De Valera's adaptation, however, there is no such condemnation of Faitiama's behaviour and Féasóg Gorm is presented as sinister from the start. When he leaves and Faitiama is left alone with her sister Áine, her tears turn to laughter and she confesses to Áine that she is glad he is gone because she is afraid of him. Áine agrees that she does not like him either, even wishing him dead. This is a departure from Perrault's version, which describes Bluebeard's courtship of both sisters and states that 'they enjoyed themselves so much that the younger of the two sisters began to think that their host's beard was not as blue as it had been, and that he was just what a gentleman should be'.²⁹ Additionally, De Valera has Áine convince Faitiama to break her promise and look in the forbidden room, telling her, 'Don't bother with any promise you gave an old scoundrel like him',³⁰ so that the transgression becomes an act of defiance against a tyrant rather than one of temptation and sin. Kirwan-Keane suggests that the tale in De Valera's hands becomes an allegory for the Irish state, with Féasóg Gorm situated as a foreign oppressor who instils fear in his subjects. Féasóg Gorm enjoys more political and martial power than his previous iterations. In the first scene, for example, Féasóg Gorm is called away to suppress a rebellion against another of his castles, where in Perrault's version he only says that he has 'an important business matter' in 'another part of the country'.³¹ Féasóg Gorm enlists Faitiama's brothers Aisim and Leara to join his fight, calling to mind Britain's historic conscription of Irish soldiers, most recently in the First World War. At the end of the play, where Perrault's Bluebeard leaves his wife alone to pray before he kills her, enabling her rescue, De Valera's Féasóg Gorm leaves Faitiama in order to summon an executioner, implying that the power he wields is an institutional one; Bluebeard's wife is no longer a victim of her own curiosity, but rather an undeserving victim of a corrupt regime's justice system.

Na Buidéil Draoidheachta and *Buaidhirt agus Bród* are two examples of plays that, although not direct retellings of either fairy tales or episodes from Irish history, nevertheless draw on both familiar fairy tale tropes and elements of Irish folklore. *Buaidhirt agus Bród*

(later translated into English as *Work and Play*) is an original fairy tale set in Ireland, with echoes of both 'Cinderella' and 'Rumpelstiltskin'. In this play, young Brighid, after suffering abuse at the hands of a malicious stepmother, is sent to work for the queen, who presents her with a bundle of flax, ordering her to spin and weave it into a wedding dress in only one night. If Brighid succeeds, she will marry the prince, but if she fails she will be put to death. Three fairies known in the Irish version only as 'Sean-Fhear' and 'Beirt Shean-Bhan' (Old Man and Two Old Women, though they are given the names Art, Sara and Nessa in the English version) come to her aid and make the dress for her in exchange for invitations to the wedding. At the wedding, the queen discovers the truth, but the fairies convince her that children should be allowed to play rather than being put to work. *Na Buidéil Dravidheachta* (*The Magic Bottles*) is set primarily in Tír na nÓg and opens with the fairies telling each other stories of their adventures, including Niamh introducing Oisín and telling the well-known story of how she brought him to Tír na nÓg. Although the setting is a familiar one from the Irish mythological cycles, in De Valera's hands it is merely the setting for a fairy tale of her own devising. Two fairies, Ceann Cait and Conn, are punished by the fairy king for tardiness by being transformed into a cat and a dog, respectively. The queen takes pity on them and intervenes, convincing the king to agree to reverse the spell if Ceann Cait and Conn can successfully lure two mortal girls to Tír na nÓg as their wives. The setting then shifts to contemporary Ireland as the two attempt to attract two girls, Róisín and Nóinín, despite their bestial appearances. The play becomes a version of the 'Beauty and the Beast' or 'Frog Prince' story, with echoes of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as the girls are won through the use of a magic elixir dropped on their eyes while they sleep that causes them to fall in love with the first beings they see. In this way, De Valera borrows elements of European stories that would likely have been well known to the students performing the plays and sets them firmly in an Irish context by incorporating them into the Irish mythological cycles.

Perhaps the most overtly nationalistic of De Valera's adaptations of European stories is *An tSean-Bhean a Bhí ina Comhnuidhe i mBróig*, an adaptation of an English cantata, 'The Little Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe', by William Stewart Roddie based on the well-known nursery rhyme. In this case, the Old Woman is a teacher, the shoe is her messy and unruly classroom, and her pupils are other nursery rhyme and

fairy tale characters: Bo Peep, Jack and Jill, Cochall Dearg [Red Riding Hood], Humpty Dumpty, Jack Horner, and Giolla Gorm [Little Boy Blue]. The School Board then arrives on the scene, led by Punch and made up of other familiar characters including Aladdin, Tomás Beag Bídeach [Tom Thumb] and Sinbad. They relieve the Old Woman of her post and announce that they will interview candidates to reform the school. The unsuccessful candidates are yet another set of known characters, including An tSean-Bhean Hubbard (Old Mother Hubbard), Fear na Féasóige Guirme (Bluebeard, anticipating the focus on him in *Féasóg Gorm i nÉirinn*) and Sean-Bhean na nGé (Mother Goose). The plot unfolds entirely through song, and for most of the first act the story is merely a vehicle for each of the characters to come onstage in turn and sing a version of his or her backstory. However, this changes when the last applicant for the teaching post arrives: Róisín Dubh, personification of Ireland. Róisín's song, unlike those that preceded it, is not about her life but about her love of children and of Ireland:

Tá Róisín mar ainm orm féin. [I am Róisín by name.]
 Ó, éistidh anois le mo sgéal, [Oh, listen now to my story,]
 Tá grádh i mo chroidhe [There is love in my heart]
 Beith riamh agus choidhche [There ever has been]
 Do pháisdí beag' dílse, do pháisdí beag' dílse, [For little sweet children, for little sweet children,]
 Beidh grádh i mo chroidhe dóibh a choidhche. [There will always be love in my heart for them.]
 Sí Éire mo tír dhúthchais féin. [Ireland herself is my homeland.]
 Níl aon tír níos áilne 'san saoghal. [No country on Earth is as lovely.]
 I gcroidhe an aois óig [In their hearts at a young age]
 Beidh lúthgháir is bród [There is joy and pride]
 Ag éisteacht le sgéalta faoi Éirinn, [In listening to stories about Ireland]
 Faoi Éirinn, [About Ireland,]
 Ag éisteacht le sgéalta faoi Éirinn. [In listening to stories about Ireland.]³²

With this song, Róisín wins over the School Board, who comments that she is 'the kind of teacher we need ... Someone who loves children and Ireland'.³³ In the second, much shorter scene, some time has

passed and the Board is visiting the school again. They find the school clean, and the children subdued and polite. Róisín Dubh, it seems, has inspired the children with her patriotic fervour. Given the fact that the *Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe* is a traditional English character, she can be taken to represent contemporary perceptions of the primary school system in pre-independence Ireland: unregulated and indifferent to children's needs. The role of the School Board in the play echoes Éamon De Valera's insistence on an active regulatory body. In a 1941 Dáil speech, he defended government inspection of schools, stating, 'I do not care what teachers are offended by it, I say that it is right that the State should inspect the schools; see what the teacher is doing during the day and how he is teaching'.³⁴ By contrast, Róisín Dubh represents the ideal national school envisioned by Éamon De Valera's Fianna Fáil government: well organised and focused on fostering patriotism through Irish language, stories and songs.

Despite their Irish settings and overt nationalism, however, De Valera's plays are not merely a vehicle for advancing a nationalist agenda; in this, they differ, for example, from the school plays written by Pádraic Pearse and others for St Enda's school two decades earlier.³⁵ In addition to using drama to teach Irish language, history and culture, De Valera was a firm believer in the potential of drama to foster children's social and moral development. Later in her life, she would strike up a correspondence and friendship with Dr. Winifred Ward, pioneer of the Creative Dramatics movement in the USA, that shows the mutual enthusiasm each had for the work of the other.³⁶ Creative Dramatics is a pedagogical technique in which teachers facilitate children's creative expression through unscripted narrative play. The philosophy behind the practice is the idea that drama is an effective means for fostering other areas of physical and mental development in children:

Creative dramatics, when it is used as a teaching tool, is both a cognitive and affective technique. It provides opportunities for auditory, visual motor and verbal activities. Problem solving (inductive and deductive thinking) is encouraged ... Creative dramatics techniques reinforce teaching and learning in language arts, social studies, science and math... Teachers are encouraged to consider the child as a total being—emotional, social and intellectual.³⁷

Although De Valera was not engaged in Creative Dramatics herself—her plays had scripts and were performed for audiences—her awareness of and admiration for Ward’s methods indicate that she saw drama as a pedagogical tool beyond the content of the plays. It is also worth noting that while her plays are scripted, there are points within the text where improvisation seems to be called for. In *An tSeán-Bhean a Bhí ina Comhnuidhe i mBróig*, for example, the dialogue strongly implies that the children were prone to bad behaviour before Róisín Dubh’s arrival; she is congratulated for transforming them into nice, polite children,³⁸ implying a contrast with their behaviour before and providing a clue to the children playing them that they are to act out in the first scene even though this is not explicitly specified. As mentioned above, those responsible for the school curriculum saw drama primarily in literary, rather than performative terms. However, De Valera’s methods also seem designed indirectly to further the language-based agenda of the curricular reforms, by encouraging extemporaneous creative thinking in Irish in an extra-curricular context.

There are many other such hints in De Valera’s play texts that reveal her nuanced understanding both of theatrical conventions and of the practical concerns of staging plays with schoolchildren as both performers and audience members. Music and dance feature prominently, and the play texts allow ample room for creative staging, improvisation and further adaptation. Her penchant for *tableaux* has already been noted as an example of the plays’ connection with the nationalist performances staged by the Daughters of Erin. However, the *tableaux* in the plays are also noteworthy for their sheer impact as visual spectacles. This can be seen in the stage directions for the key scene in *Féasóg Gorm i nÉirinn*, the wordless scene in which Faitiama discovers what her husband is keeping in the forbidden room:

Very dark stage. Faitiama enters. She is wearing a white gown. A bright light on her. She opens the black door. Next there appear six or more dead women hanging over a door or screen with blood on them. On seeing this, she drops the key. She lets out a scream and faints. (Curtain down)³⁹

Faitiama’s white gown under the bright light would here provide a dramatic visual contrast to the dark scene around her, as well as emphasising her innocence at this moment before her husband’s true character is revealed. That this image is a scene in and of itself speaks to its dramatic

potential and also indicates that although it is a short scene, the discovery of the chamber was likely intended to be a drawn-out affair, in which suspense is built leading to a major cathartic moment. Care has also been put into describing how the scene is to be staged, with the instruction to have the dead women hanging over a door or screen, which would have more visual impact than if they were, for example, laid out on the floor. The direction for 'six or more' women also indicates that De Valera was aware of the practical concerns of staging a play with a group of schoolchildren, as more dead wives could be added if there were children left without parts. This is typical of De Valera's plays: although the number of speaking roles in each play is limited, De Valera typically includes at least one crowd scene, usually with a musical number, in order to control for different class sizes. For example, *Cochaillín Dearg agus an Mactíre* [Red Riding Hood and the Wolf] opens not in the title character's house, as most versions of the Red Riding Hood story do, but in a schoolyard with an unspecified number of children 'in two lines in front of each other', playing and singing.⁴⁰ Cochaillín's mother then enters to scold her for not coming home from school on time and to give her the basket of food to take to her grandmother. In the next scene, Cochaillín is distracted by singing and dancing flowers, played by 'children dressed as flowers, roses, lilies, and many others'.⁴¹ By inserting these two sequences, De Valera adapts a story with few characters into one that can easily be performed by either a large or a small cast. *An tSean-Bhean a Bhí ina Comhnuidhe i mBróig* and *Lá Bealtaine* (May Day) include similar sequences in which a group of children sing and dance together, and *Na Buidéil Draoidheachta* opens with the fairies of Tír na nÓg singing, the girls on one side of the stage and the boys on the other, with the king and queen seated in the middle.⁴²

Adaptation is an inherently metafictional genre, concerned as it is with drawing attention to one text's relationship with another. De Valera's adaptations also have metatheatrical elements, in particular their tendency to break the fourth wall, reminding the audience that they are watching a theatrical performance through self-referential humour. The scope for improvisation has already been discussed in relation to *An tSean-Bhean a Bhí ina Comhnuidhe i mBróig*, and as the play is set in a school, there is also potential for parody and knowing references to specific teachers and students through costume, gesture and speech (although we can only speculate on the extent to which this was attempted in performance). In addition to the parodic potential suggested in this play, many of the plays

have characters comment on their situations using theatrical terms. For example, when Conn the woodsman is introduced in *Cochaillín Dearg agus an Mactíre*, he observes that the happy, singing children are a lovely sight ('radharc').⁴³ However, 'radharc' is also the word for 'scene', one that appears at the top of every scene in every one of De Valera's plays, thus drawing attention to the fact that the sight of the children playing is indeed a scene in a play. Similarly, when Fáiama says goodbye to her husband in *Féasóg Gorm i nÉirinn*, she laments the sad story they are acting out,⁴⁴ calling attention both to the fact that this is a well-known story that has been acted out before and to the fact that the character is herself acting at this moment, as she later reveals that she is actually happy he is leaving.

In writing plays with Irish themes, in the Irish language, for Irish children, Sinéad De Valera helped to further an educational policy that prioritised Irish language and culture above all other subjects. Her plays are nationalist in theme and reflect both her early political activism as a member of the nationalist Gaelic League and Daughters of Erin and the prevailing political climate under the Fianna Fáil government led her husband Éamon. However, De Valera's plays for schools also filled a gap when it came to children's culture in the Irish Free State, as they introduced children to theatre at a time when few would have thought of children as potential theatre audience members, and the idea of producing plays specifically for children was in its infancy. De Valera recognised the educative potential of drama long before this notion was commonplace and envisioned children as creative beings at a time when educational policy makers viewed them primarily as vessels rather than agents. Despite their clear political agenda, then, De Valera's plays also reveal a nuanced and innovative appreciation for the potential of drama both as an educational tool and as a means of creative expression for young people.

NOTES

1. Translations from Irish are mine except where otherwise noted. I am grateful to Sam Ó Fearraigh for his advice and assistance with the language at all stages of researching and writing this essay.
2. The President of the Executive Council was the title of the head of government of the Irish Free State between 1922 and 1937, when the title 'Taoiseach' was adopted.

3. Throughout this essay, the surname 'De Valera' is used as a shorthand for Sinéad De Valera unless otherwise noted.
4. The list that follows represents selected examples of each category; for a full list of De Valera's work, see Siobhán Kirwan-Keane, in 'Out of the Shadow of the Long Fellow: Sinéad De Valera: Idealist, Activist, Dramatist' (master's thesis, St Patrick's College Drumcondra, 2009).
5. See, for example, Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1995), especially chapter 6: 'Childhood and Ireland'.
6. Róna Nic Congáil, 'Fiction, Amusement, Instruction: The Irish Fireside Club and the Educational Ideology of the Gaelic League', in *Children, Childhood and Irish Society, 1500 to the Present*, ed. Maria Luddy and James M. Smith (Dublin: Four Courts, 2014), 179.
7. Nic Congáil, 'Fiction, Amusement, Instruction', 164.
8. Douglas Hyde, 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland', reproduced in *Poetry and Ireland Since 1800: A Source Book*, ed. Mark Storey (London: Routledge, 1988), 81.
9. Paige Reynolds, 'Performance and Spectacle in (and out) of Modern Irish Theatre', in *The Irish Dramatic Revival 1899–1939*, ed. Anthony Roche (London: Methuen Drama, 2015), 162. See also Mary Trotter, *Ireland's National Theatres: Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001); Timothy McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893–1910* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).
10. Reynolds, 'Performance and Spectacle', 164.
11. Kirwan-Keane, 'Out of the Shadow', 66.
12. Karen Vandavelde, *The Alternative Dramatic Revival in Ireland, 1897–1913* (Dublin: Maunsel & Company, 2005), 25.
13. Nic Congáil, 'Fiction, Amusement, Instruction', 180.
14. See, for example, Trotter, Vandavelde, McMahon.
15. Vandavelde, *Alternative Dramatic Revival*, 2–3.
16. Ibid.
17. 'Sa mbliain 1681. Tyburn. Scata daoine, fir is mná, ina seasamh ar an ardán. Brat ar chúl an ardáin. An comhluadar ag caint an amhráin seo' De Valera, *Oilibhéar Beannaithe Ploingcéad* (Baile Átha Cliath: M.H. MacGuill agus a Mhac, Teór., 1947), 19.
18. 'Oilibhéar ina sheasamh ar ardán ar chúl na stáitse' (De Valera, *Oilibhéar Beannaithe Ploingcéad*, 20).
19. Aine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, eds., 'Public Notice No. 4: Concerning the Teaching of Irish Language in the National Schools', in *Irish Educational Documents, Volume II: 1922–1991* (Dublin: Church of Ireland College of Education, 1992), 88.

20. Hyland and Milne, 'Public Notice No. 4', 99.
21. 'Revised Programme of Primary Instruction, 1934', in Hyland and Milne, 114.
22. 'Some Notes on the Subjects of Instruction', in Hyland and Milne, 93–94.
23. Hyde, 'Necessity for De-Anglicising', 82.
24. There was a radical movement to revive the old typeface in addition to the language, and this formed part of a larger debate concerning the printing of Irish language textbooks; for further discussion, see Adrian Kelly, "'Mor- Ghantntanas Leabhar,'" Irish Language Textbooks', in *Compulsory Irish: Language and Education in Ireland, 1870s–1970s* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2002).
25. 'Tá na saoihe go léir ar aon intinn faoi'n gceist seo nach bhfuil slí ar domhan níos fear chun teangan ar bith do chúir dá labhairt ag páisdí óga ná leigint dóibh drámanna beaga a chleachtadh agus a léiriú sa teangain sin' (*Irish Schools Weekly*, 1935, 1187. Quoted and translated by Kirwan-Keane, 49).
26. Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, 169.
27. Charles Perrault, 'Bluebeard', in *The Complete Fairy Tales*, ed. Christopher Betts (Oxford World Classics), 113–114.
28. Tatar, *Hard Facts*, 158.
29. Perrault, 'Bluebeard', 104.
30. 'Ó, ná bac le aon gheallamhaint a thug tú do shean-bhitheamhach mar é', De Valera, *Féasóg Gorm i nÉirinn* (Baile Átha Cliath: M.H. MacGuill agus a Mhac, Teór., 1943), 9.
31. Perrault, 'Bluebeard', 104.
32. De Valera, *An tSean-Bhean a bhí i n-a Comhnuidhe i mBróig* (Baile Átha Cliath: M.H. MacGuill agus a Mhac, Teór., 1940), 19.
33. "'Sé sin an saghas múinteoir' atá ag teastáil uainn, nach é?" / "'Sé. Duine a bhfuil grádh aici do pháistí is d'Éirinn'". De Valera, *An tSean-Bhean a Bhí ina Comhnuidhe i mBróig*, 20.
34. Quoted in Hyland and Milne, 111.
35. For further discussion of drama at St Enda's, see Trotter, chapter 4: 'The Boys of St Enda's', 137–166.
36. The details of this correspondence are outlined in Kirwan-Keane, 'Out of the Shadow', 75–86.
37. Harriet W. Ehrlich, 'Creative Dramatics as a Classroom Teaching Technique', in *Elementary English* 51, no. 1 (1974): 75.
38. 'Tá na páisdí go deas múinte béasach anois'. De Valera, *An tSean-Bhean a Bhí ina Comhnuidhe i mBróig*, 21.
39. 'An t-árdán an-dorcha. Faitima isteach. Gúna bán uisthí [*sic*]. Solas ag lonnradh uirthi. Osglann sí an doras dubh. Chítear aghaidhthe seisear

nó mór-sheisear ban marbh ar crochadh thar dhóras nó sgaileán agus fuil ortha. Ar bhfeicsint na gceann di, tuiteann an eochair. Leigeann sí sgread aiste agus tuiteann sí a laige (Brat anuas)’. De Valera, *Féasóg Gorm i nÉirinn*, 11.

40. ‘Páistí ag imirt. Iad i dhá line os comhair a chéile. Leath acu ar an dtaobh dheis, leath ar an dtaobh chlé. Iad ag cantain agus ag siúl anon ‘s anall os comhair a chéile’. De Valera, *Cochaillín Dearg agus an Mactíre* (Baile Átha Cliath: M.H. Mac an Ghoill agus a Mhac, Teór, 1940), 5.
41. ‘Scata páistí gléasta mar bhláthanna, rósanna, lilí, agus lán eile’, De Valera, *Cochaillín Dearg agus an Mactíre*, 7.
42. ‘An Rí agus an Bhainríoghan in a suidhe ar shuidheachán i lár an árdáin ar chúlaibh. Sgata cailíní in a seasamh ar an taoibh chlé, sgata buachaillí in a seasamh ar an taoibh dheis. Cantar an rann so’. De Valera, *Na Buidéil Draoicheada*, 5.
43. De Valera, *Cochaillín Dearg agus an Mactíre*, 6.
44. ‘Ó, a Thaoisigh, nach brónach an sgéal é go bhfuil tú ag imtheacht uaim’. De Valera, *Féasóg Gorm i nÉirinn*, 6.



CHAPTER 6

Jimín Mháire Thaidhg and Constructions of Childhood in Irish-Language Children's Literature in the Independence Period, 1910–1940

Róisín Adams

INTRODUCTION

In *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (1994), Peter Hunt states that 'children's literature is a powerful literature, and that such power cannot be neutral or innocent, or trivial'.¹ Children are influenced by the narratives and ideologies they encounter, and it is through those narratives and ideologies that they construct their perception of the world around them and their place within that world. This aspect of children's literature has long been recognised; writing of John Newbery, whose 1744 work *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* is widely accepted to be the first ever children's book, M. O. Grenby states that 'he used a simple but durable formula: the encasement of the instructive material that adults thought their children would need within an entertaining format that

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children might be supposed to want'.² Since then, children's literature has doubled as a form of entertainment and a tool of socialisation and as a result often gives a fascinating insight into different periods in a society's history; one can see the values and ideologies that adults wished to promote in the younger members of society in the way childhood is constructed in its children's literature.

This essay will focus on the Irish-language children's literature published between the years 1910 and 1940, in light of this dual function of children's literature. Those thirty years encompass many significant and transformative events in the history of the Irish nation—including the Easter Rising (1916), the War of Independence (1919–1921), the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) and the subsequent foundation of the Irish Free State (1922) and civil war (1922–1923)—and as such constitute a crucial period in the formation of the Irish state. As scholars such as Ríona Nic Congáil, Michael Flanagan and Janette Condon have demonstrated in their research, study of the English-language material produced in Ireland for children in this independence period (and in the period preceding it) shows that there was a strong awareness at the time of the influence that children's reading material could have on its readers and on their perception of Ireland, of its relationship with England and of their roles within Irish society.³ Nationalist periodicals such as Alexander Martin Sullivan's *Young Ireland: An Irish Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction* (1875–1891) and the Christian Brothers' *Our Boys* (1914–1990) as a result sought to construct an image of Irish childhood that promoted certain values and ideologies, seen as specifically Irish, and thus 'provide a bulwark against the perceived "floods" of English periodicals "invading" Ireland'.⁴

The way in which Irish life and childhood was constructed in these nationalist periodicals has been discussed in depth by Nic Congáil, Flanagan and Condon, in their writings on *Young Ireland* and *Our Boys*.⁵ One major aspect of this construction, as Flanagan has written, was a belief that:

the "real" Ireland, the "authentic" Ireland was not to be found in the streets of Dublin, Cork or Galway: the definitive form of true Irish community was located on an idealized western seaboard, far from the decay and corruption of what was perceived as the alien influence of modern metropolitan culture.⁶

Rural life, as a result, was very much to the fore in the construction of Irish childhood in these periodicals, and indeed, urban life was largely ignored in English-language children's literature in Ireland right up until the 1980s.⁷ Other values these periodicals sought to inculcate in their readers include a respect for and a profound interest in Irish history, mythology and folklore; a reverence for the Catholic Church and its teachings; a love of the Irish language; a whole-hearted support of the nationalist movement; and—in tandem with their promotion of rural life—a respect for the traditional family and community structures associated with that life.

The dominant ideologies promoted in English-language children's literature in Ireland changed very little during and after the years of the Irish Free State (1922–1937). In his analysis of the magazine *Our Boys* in the Irish Free State, Flanagan writes that 'the magazine may be seen as part of a collective policy of illusion, whereby much of what the dominant ideology rejected was ignored in terms of the development of nationalist iconography'.⁸ These ideologies were supported by the gaelicisation of the school system, which placed Irish language, history and culture to the fore, and were perhaps most famously espoused by Éamon de Valera during his years as Taoiseach⁹ of Ireland from 1932 to 1948. These ideologies were so pervasive in the English-language children's literature published in Ireland at the time that Robert Dunbar credits Eilís Dillon, who first started publishing in English in the 1950s, for making '[t]he first notable attempt to present a different viewpoint of an Irish setting'.¹⁰

Given their prominence in the English-language children's literature published in Ireland between 1910 and 1940, one would expect to find much the same ideologies in the Irish-language children's literature published in the same period, with perhaps an even greater emphasis on the importance of the language itself. This is not quite the case, however, and the first aim of this essay is to investigate the reasons for the non-conformity of many Irish-language texts published for children in the independence period to the prevailing nationalist ideologies of the time. It shall be shown that the development of Irish-language children's literature between 1910 and 1940 can be split quite neatly into two distinct periods, separated in 1926 by the foundation of An Gúm, the state publication company. While fewer in number, the Irish-language books published for children before 1926 generally demonstrate the same awareness of the influence of children's literature evident in

the English-language material of the time and promote similar values and ideologies. This promotion, as shall be discussed, was often done in a very heavy-handed and propagandist way, privileging the socialising function of children's literature over its entertaining function.

Works published by An Gúm before 1940, on the other hand, while more numerous, are frequently at odds with what one would expect of children's literature in the Irish Free State. Rather than promoting nationalist, Catholic, and traditional Irish values, An Gúm's earliest children's books often contained non-Irish settings and characters, less than complimentary references to Ireland and, at times, values and ideologies that were not at all consistent with those being widely promulgated amongst the youth of Ireland at the time. It shall be proposed that this inconsistency was a result of An Gúm's lack of awareness of the power of children's literature in those years, and their perception of children's books as vehicles of language instruction and reinforcement rather than as vehicles of socialisation.

The second part of the essay will look at the construction of childhood in one exceptional text published during the independence period, *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*¹¹ (1921) by Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha (An Seabhac). *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* is exceptional in many ways, not least for its quality, and it is still considered today to be one of the best (if not *the* best) Irish-language books for children ever written. In the context of this essay, *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* is of particular interest, as unlike the majority of the children's texts published by An Gúm in the latter half of the independence period, it does contain a deliberate construction of the Irish child and promotes a certain image of Irish childhood. On the other hand, unlike most other Irish-language children's books published before the foundation of An Gúm, its construction of Irish childhood is complex and layered, and is never so heavy-handed that it interferes with the enjoyment of the text; indeed, on occasion it subtly questions the dominant nationalist ideologies of the time.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRISH-LANGUAGE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, 1910–1940

As evinced by Máire Ní Chinnéide's article 'Leabhra don Aos Óg: Ceist Mhór le Socrú',¹² which appeared in the Gaelic League's periodical *Misneach* on 3 August 1921, there was a shortage of reading material

in Irish for children at the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially of books that were intended for entertainment rather than instruction. While Ní Chinnéide mentions a few exceptional works—for example, Tadhg Ó Donnchadha's beautifully illustrated collection of verse and stories *An tÁilleán*,¹³ published by the Gaelic League in 1902 and out of print by 1921—she laments that works of that standard, that truly appealed to children, were extremely scarce at the time. Another book Ní Chinnéide mentions in her article is W. P. Ryan's *Sídheoga ag Obair* (1903),¹⁴ also published by the Gaelic League, and indeed it was the Gaelic League that published most of the earliest works in Irish for both children and adults; between 1893 and 1918, it published 510 texts altogether.¹⁵ In the aftermath of the Easter Rising, however, the Gaelic League's output slowed gradually to a halt, and the publication of Irish-language books was left to publication houses that dealt primarily with English-language texts—the Educational Company of Ireland, Browne and Nolan, and Maunsel and Roberts, for example.

The majority of the Irish-language children's books published by the Gaelic League and by other Irish publishers before 1926 demonstrate, as discussed, a clear awareness of the potential of children's literature to influence young readers. As early as 1902, Tadhg Ó Donnchadha included the following in his message to child readers in the preface to *An tÁilleán*:

Remember that you were born in Ireland; that we ought to do our best for Ireland; to live and die in Ireland; and since Irish is our own Language, to always speak it.

May God be with you always, my friends, and Bless you.¹⁶

Similarly, another Gaelic League book mentioned by Ní Chinnéide, *Sídheoga ag Obair* by W. P. Ryan, contains stories whose primary aim is clearly to encourage children to learn Irish and to take an interest in Irish history and culture. In one such story, 'Tír gan Fás', a young girl called Eibhlín (who is learning Irish with the Gaelic League), encounters the ghost of her grandmother when walking outside at night. Eibhlín's grandmother's soul, Eibhlín discovers, has been condemned to an unnatural, unchanging purgatory—along with many of her contemporaries—for the sin of giving up her mother tongue, Irish, and of not passing it on to her children.¹⁷ There is hope for her, however—if the children

of Ireland learn Irish again, their ancestors will also relearn it alongside them and finally get to ascend to heaven. The description of the grandmother's purgatory is stark, bleak and frightening, and Ryan lays a heavy burden and responsibility on the children of Ireland in the story. His account of Eibhlín's grandmother's decision to not pass her native tongue on to her children is also extremely one-sided and makes no mention of the hardship and economic necessity that caused most Irish speakers to make such a decision.

To look at slightly a later text, Pádraig Ó Bróithe's *Na Rudai Beaga*,¹⁸ an alphabet book which was published sometime between 1913 and 1921 by Cólucht Foillsighthe Dáibhis,¹⁹ is very much in keeping with the nationalist ideologies discussed above. There is a relatively small amount of text in the book—it contains a short verse for each letter of the Irish alphabet—but still succeeds in effectively promoting nationalism, Catholicism, rural life and, of course, the Irish language. The following, for example, are the (translated) entries for D, E, G, N, O and T in the book:

Dáil Éireann forever! / The day is not far from us / that they will get rid of our country's enemies!²⁰

Ireland, my little country / I will always love you / Fighting on your behalf / I would be glad to die.²¹

Oh sweet-sounding, well-spoken Irish, there isn't a language in the world / that is more noble and musical than the language of the Irish.²²

Christmas, the time / when my heart is happy / That day when / Jesus Christ was born.²³

Irish Volunteers / may they survive / to bring freedom / to Ireland.²⁴

This little house of ours / on the side of the mountain / I would prefer it to a castle / our own little house.²⁵

As all these examples demonstrate, authors and publishers who produced Irish-language books for children before An Gúm's foundation were clearly aware of the role children's literature can play in shaping a child's perceptions and attitudes and employed those books in order to promote a particular image of Ireland and of childhood in Ireland. Indeed, this kind of didacticism, rather than entertainment, appears to have been the primary function of many of those books.

The departure of the Gaelic League from the publishing scene, thereby leaving the publication of Irish books in the hands of publishers who mainly produced English texts, had consequences for Irish-language literature. As discussed by Ní Mhianáin,²⁶ Ó Neachtain,²⁷ and Ó Baoill,²⁸ reading in Irish for entertainment has never been prevalent amongst native Irish speakers, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, as O'Leary has written, rural native speakers of Irish were 'overwhelmingly illiterate in Irish'.²⁹ The school market was the one market that could be depended upon to sell books in Irish, and publishers catered to that market in order to make a profit.³⁰ The writer Pádraic Ó Conaire, in particular, lamented this state of affairs, dubbing the school-child a 'tyrant', and claiming that Irish-language writers were stunting the growth of a literature in that language by censoring their own work so that it would be suitable for the classroom.³¹

This state of affairs was theoretically brought to an end in 1926, with the foundation of An Gúm, the state publication company. Children's literature was an important part of An Gúm's agenda from its early years and became even more important with time; by the 1970s An Gúm was primarily a publisher of textbooks and children's books and remains so today. The advantage that An Gúm held, as a publisher of Irish-language children's books in the early twentieth century, was that it had the fiscal support of the Government and therefore did not need to constantly make a profit to survive. It had the resources to create a children's literature and, as importantly, to try and create a market for that literature, without having to worry about staying in business; it could free Irish-language children's literature from the classroom. At a glance, one would surmise that it was successful in this endeavour during the time period considered; in spite of a slow start (its first children's book, *Sgéalta ón Radio* by Shán Ó Cuív, was not published until March 1931),³² An Gúm managed to issue around eighty works for children by the end of 1930s, each one ostensibly intended for the entertainment of Irish-reading children outside of the classroom.

An analysis of An Gúm's earliest publications for children shows us, however, that ideologically many of them bear very little resemblance to the Irish-language children's books published before 1926 or to the English-language children's literature being published in Ireland at the time. Though An Gúm issued a handful of texts that fit with the image of Irish life and childhood associated with the Irish Free

State—for example Shán Ó Cuív's *Sgéalta ón Radio* and translations of Padraic Colum's *The King of Ireland's Son* (1916) and *A Boy in Eirinn* (1913)—*Mac Rí na hÉireann*³³ (1935) and *Mac-Ghníomhartha Fhinn Uí Dhomhnaill*³⁴ (1934)—for every book of that ilk published by An Gúm there were many more that were inconsistent with Free State ideology and in which the Irish child is conspicuously absent. *Na Laochra* (1933)³⁵ and *Clann Odin* (1936),³⁶ for example, translations of texts by Charles Kingsley and Padraic Colum respectively, contained tales from Greek and Norse mythology, and many other books were set outside of Ireland and featured non-Irish characters—including translations of works by Robert Louis Stevenson, Carlo Collodi, Alphonse Daudet, Captain Marryat, Jack London and Captain Mayne Reid.

One of the reasons, of course, for the absence of the Irish child in many of these texts, and for the lack of any unifying ideology in An Gúm's works for children at the time, is that they were primarily translations, and as such had not been originally written with the children of the Irish Free State in mind as a target audience.³⁷ They had, however, been selected for translation and translated with those children in mind. The attitude at the time in An Gúm seems to have been that it was sufficient to translate books from genres known to appeal to children, or classics known to be popular with children (i.e. if the book contained fairy tales, was an adventure story or was considered a classic of children's literature). The apparent disinterest of An Gúm's staff in the actual content of the books, beyond that superficial level, is remarkable, as is the lack of effort on the part of the translators to adapt the original texts to appeal to their young target market.

One clear example of this is the *Laethannta Gréine* series of 25 books that An Gúm published between 1932 and 1939.³⁸ These stories were mainly translations from the Enid Blyton-penned magazine *Sunny Stories for Little Folks*, of which Seán Mac Lellan, An Gúm's Publications Officer, wrote 'not alone are the names and scenes and phrases quite foreign to the child who has learnt to speak and read Irish but the atmosphere, motive, and moral are, in many cases, antipathetic to the Gaelic mind'³⁹ (though Mac Lellan does not appear to have actually objected to their selection for translation). The translators of this series⁴⁰ were initially asked to adapt the stories for an Irish audience where possible,⁴¹ but there is very little sign of this in the books themselves. Apart from one reference to Dublin in *Eachtra Brocaire* (1934), the stories do not

appear to have been altered in any significant way to make them more suitable to a young Irish readership.⁴²

Interestingly, Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha (An Seabhac), author of *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, was an editor in An Gúm when work began on *Laethanta Gréine*, and he was given charge of the series after the stories had been selected and the translators had been recruited. He disapproved of the project straight away, due to the content of the stories themselves and the quality of the translations. Below are extracts from two letters he wrote in January 1932, around the time when the first book in the series, *An tIarla Éamonn agus an Sladaidhe*,⁴³ was being sent to the printers:

Here is this thing to send to the printers. I'm not at all satisfied with it but it is too late now to do anything about it. Shouldn't it be our best writers that we set writing books for children?⁴⁴

The Department ought to understand that this material is no good, that the Irish in it is weak even after all that has been done to fix it, and, the language has not been shaped in any way to make it suitable for children.⁴⁵

In spite of An Seabhac's disapproval, twenty-five books were published in the series (though originally there were supposed to be thirty). Sales figures for the series were disappointing, however, and in 1955 An Gúm sold many copies of works from the series as waste paper.⁴⁶

That An Gúm perceived Irish-language children's literature in its early years primarily as a way by which children could practise and improve their Irish literacy skills, and was either unaware of or apathetic to the potential of that literature to help (or hinder) the formation of the new nation, is evident from some of the references to Ireland in its early publications. Ireland is mentioned once in Proinnsias Ó Brógáin's 1934 translation of Captain Marryat's *The Children of the New Forest* (1847), *Páistí na Nua-Fhoraoise*.⁴⁷ This reference occurs when the main character, Edward, is asked for news of the activities of Oliver Cromwell. He replies: 'I didn't hear anything special ... I know that Cromwell is over in Ireland, and they say that he's getting on well, but I didn't bother getting a detailed account'.⁴⁸ Such a casual and flippant reference to a particularly brutal period in the history of Ireland is not quite what one would expect in the children's literature of the Irish Free State, especially in literature funded by a government so determined to champion Irish

language and culture. The choice of *The Children of the New Forest* for translation into Irish at the time is also strange in and of itself, as the story is set in England at the time of the English Civil War, with the main characters firmly on the side of the British monarchy.

Another less than complimentary reference to Ireland occurs in *Seán Workmann*,⁴⁹ a 1933 translation of Hans Dominik's *John Workmann* (1909/1921/1924)⁵⁰ about an enterprising young man of German descent living in America. The only Irish character in the 531-page translation is an exhausted old man, still eking out a living in the Wild West. When Seán, the protagonist, shows the old man pity he is told that 'in comparison with the hardship he had suffered on his father's farm in Ireland he was living the life of a noble man'.⁵¹ Again, this reference is very much at odds with the championing of rural life so associated with the Irish Free State, as is, indeed, the novel itself, with its frequent urban settings, its veneration of modernisation and the American Dream, and its constant descriptions of machinery. Interestingly, the German company who sold the rights of *John Workmann* to An Gúm suggested several times that An Gúm adapt the story so as to make Seán a character of Irish descent, and thus make the story more relevant and attractive to Irish readers.⁵² It is quite telling of An Gúm's attitude towards children's literature at the time that it took no heed of this suggestion.

Of course, it is in no way inherently a negative thing that An Gúm did not choose to use its early publications for children as vehicles for furthering state-espoused ideologies. Evidence suggests, however, that it was An Gúm's lack of awareness of the influence that children's literature can have on readers, and its single-minded focus on providing reading material in Irish, no matter the content, that led to so many texts being published for children in the Irish Free State that do not seem to fit with the dominant ideologies of the period. In later years, as An Gúm learned more about the publication of children's books from the failures and successes of its various projects, as well as from interacting with authors, translators and illustrators for children, it became a lot more careful of the messages that it was sending young readers in its translations. Pádraig Ó Moghráin, for example, was asked to adapt and even rewrite some of his translation of E. D. Laborde's *The Tales of the Wind King* (1929), *Sgéalta Rí na nGaoth*⁵³—published in 1941—as one of An Gúm's reviewers deemed the original to be 'nothing but imperial propaganda from start to finish'.⁵⁴ In 1938 An Gúm also published a completely gaelicised version of J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911), adapted

by Máiréad Ní Ghráda as *Tír na Deó*.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the translations produced by An Gúm in the 1940s and 1950s were predominantly set in Ireland, or featured Irish characters, for example works by Patricia Lynch and Eileen O'Faoláin.

The late 1930s simultaneously saw an increase in the number of original texts being published for children by An Gúm, with works by Ailbhe Ó Monacháin, Marion King and Cathal Mac Aonghusa appearing in 1937, 1938 and 1939—works that were very much in keeping with the dominant ideologies of the state, promoting in particular Irish mythology, rural Irish life, and militant and economic nationalism. An Gúm itself, likely motivated by the poor sales of translations such as *Laethanna Gréine*, decided in 1936 to offer a higher rate of payment to authors who submitted original works for children, and this attracted such prolific and successful authors as Cathal Ó Sándair and Críostóir Ó Floinn who published many original Irish works for children with An Gúm in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁶

JIMÍN MHÁIRE THAIDHG AND THE IRISH CHILD

While An Gúm's burgeoning understanding of the power of children's literature is of interest to the scholar in and of itself, the lack of any unifying ideology in the construction of childhood in Ireland in those early works, combined with the shortage of material published before An Gúm's conception and the blatantly propagandist nature of many of those texts, leaves very few works in Irish in the thirty year period between 1910 and 1940 that attempted to construct a concept of what Irish childhood was, or ought to be, with any degree of complexity or subtlety. This final section of the essay, however, will examine just such a construction of Irish childhood in one exceptional text from the period 1910–1940, Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha's *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*.

Jimín Mháire Thaidhg first appeared as a serial in the Irish-language periodical *An Lóchrann* in October 1919 and ran until December 1920.⁵⁷ Its author was Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha (1883–1964), better known as An Seabhac,⁵⁸ a bilingual native of the breac-Ghaeltacht⁵⁹ area of Burnham East (Baile an Ghóilín) in west Kerry, who was earning a living at the time by teaching Irish and working as a *timire*⁶⁰ for the Gaelic League.⁶¹ He was also active in the Irish Volunteers and as a result was imprisoned a number of times in England and in Ireland during the War

of Independence.⁶² Though its original publication in a periodical for the general public implies that *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* was perhaps not originally intended as a story specifically for children, as pointed out by Brian Mac Maghnúis,⁶³ its excellence as a story for children was immediately recognised and in 1921 two editions of it were published in book form: *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, by Maunsel and Roberts, and *Jimín: Eagrán Nua de Jimín Mháire Thaidhg do hultmhúigheadh go speisialta i gcomhair scoileanna*,⁶⁴ by the Educational Company.⁶⁵

The story itself, though highly entertaining, is quite straightforward. The young narrator, after introducing himself to his readers as Jimín Mháire Thaidhg (or Séamus Ó Breasail) and explaining his impetus for writing, regales his readers with tales of the various exploits he engaged in in his rural community, from slipping whiskey to a gander,⁶⁶ to going to the bog with the men cutting turf,⁶⁷ to stowing away on a fishing boat without telling his family.⁶⁸ As Mac Maghnúis has discussed, while Jimín's roguish ways inspire a fondness in the reader, An Seabhac also succeeds in portraying the arrogance and selfishness of youth, as Jimín goes about his antics with little regard for their effect on others.⁶⁹ Indeed, An Seabhac's great success in *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* is in his construction of a lovable rogue who is also extremely believable as a character; Jimín may be short-sighted in his pursuit of adventure, mischief and food; he may drown cats, steal cakes and intoxicate geese; but he will always be redeemed by his innocence and by his love for his family and his community.

This construction of childhood, as a space for fun, mischief and a sort of selfish innocence, is quite common in children's literature—Eilís Dillon, for example, likened Jimín to the titular William in Richmal Crompton's *Just William* stories and to Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn.⁷⁰ There are many elements in *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, however, that are specific to the period and place in which it was written, i.e. Ireland during its independence period, just before the foundation of the Irish Free State. It is on three of these elements in particular that the final section of this essay will focus: the championing of the rural, a veneration of Catholicism and Catholic teachings, and a promotion of nationalism. While these three elements of the dominant ideology in Ireland at the time are very much a part of *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, they are not idealised in the same way they are in other texts from the period, but are in fact depicted in a way that is complex and realistic.

RURALISM, RELIGION AND NATIONALISM IN *JIMÍN MHÁIRE THAIDHG*

It would be inaccurate, in a way, to say that *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* promotes the rural over the urban, as in fact the urban is completely absent from the text. The furthest Jimín gets from home, before being sent off to the seminary, is the local town of Dingle (an Daingean). The only version of Irish childhood depicted in the text is rural, Gaeltacht childhood. The importance of the Gaeltacht in *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* is implied in the book's title: referring to someone by their first name followed by a parent's name (usually the father) and a grandparent's name is a strong custom in Gaeltacht areas to this day.⁷¹ An Seabhac was, in the words of Philip O'Leary, a 'ruralist',⁷² and 'wrote at his best simultaneously from and for his own community'.⁷³ It was his accurate depiction of Gaeltacht life and Gaeltacht speech, as much as his accurate depiction of the mind of a young boy, that garnered widespread praise for *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* when it was first published. Peadar Ó hAnnracháin, for example, when reviewing the book in *Misneach* in November 1921, wrote the following:

When he was writing Jimín he kept the book-folk and the city-folk and all other folk that don't understand country-folk a good bit away from him on the far side of the river. He would almost say to himself, when he would think that some of those over there would be reading Jimín – "Oh, the poor miserable creatures, aren't they to be pitied with no first-hand knowledge of the simple magical life we live!"⁷⁴

On a closer look at *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, however, we see that its portrayal of rural, Gaeltacht life is not as 'magical' and idyllic as implied by Ó hAnnracháin above. Negative aspects of Gaeltacht existence come to the fore on occasion, the most significant example of which is the lack of agency that results from poverty. This lack of agency almost causes one of the most likeable characters in the book, Nell Mháire Aindí, to have to marry Peats Taimín, a man twice her age in whom she has no interest. Though tradition can also be blamed in this case, as it was traditional for parents to decide who their children would wed,⁷⁵ the following discussion between Jimín's mother and Nell's mother shows that money was also a significant factor:

“Was it a big dowry Peats offered you, Máire?” asked Mam.

“It was, my dear,” said Máire, “five hundred pounds in total, and wouldn’t we be lucky to have that much money come in the door to us. I would never stop regretting it if I let it slip away from me.”⁷⁶

Luckily for Nell, however, Jimín concocts a plan and manages to insult Peats Taimín into retracting his offer of marriage, and instead, Nell gets to marry the man she loves, Tadhg Óg. Unfortunately for Jimín, however, no one intercedes on his behalf when his mother decides that he will join the priesthood, without taking his feelings on the matter into account. Though Máire Thaidhg insists that it is ‘to do God’s service’⁷⁷ she is sending Jimín to the seminary, rather than for the status he would achieve or for the money he would earn, her plans for him and for his sister Cáit (whose future husband will be a *cliabhain isteach*,⁷⁸ Máire Thaidhg has decided) are those of a mother trying to make sure her children have a good future (and will be able to care for her and their father in their old age), while severely limited in her options by her station in life.

Interestingly, An Seabhadh omitted the two chapters dealing with Nell’s potential marriage to Peats Taimín and her actual marriage to Tadhg Óg when putting the 1921 school edition together.⁷⁹ Mac Maghnuis has suggested that this omission was most likely due to the adult concerns of those chapters, deemed not to be relevant or appropriate in a text for schoolchildren,⁸⁰ but it may also have to do with the less attractive side of rural life that they depict. This less attractive side included poverty, hardship, and a lack of choices, and is summed up in the book by Nell’s mother, Máire Aindí, as she tries to dissuade Jimín’s mother from punishing him too severely for one of his many misdemeanours. She says: ‘Life will teach him soon enough that it was for hardship that we were born’.⁸¹ Rural Gaeltacht life in *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, therefore, while treated with great respect by the author, is not portrayed as idyllic or without hardship.

There is a similar sense of ambiguity in An Seabhadh’s treatment of religion in *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*. While clearly an integral part of life in the Gaeltacht community of which Jimín is a part, as seen in the way that life is structured around Catholic rituals—mass, Christmas, weddings—it doesn’t actually play a significant role in Jimín’s thoughts and motivations in the text until the final chapter. While he displays an

unquestioning belief in God on occasion, local stories and folklore are a much more common motivation for Jimín during his adventures. It is Sean-Bhrighid's accounts of finding newborn babies amongst the seaweed, for example, that spurs Jimín to sneak out of the house one night to try find a child for a childless couple in the parish. Similarly, Tadhg Óg's stories of Tír na nÓg and of ghosts are just as real to Jimín and his friends as is the existence of God. Indeed, Jimín's thoughts turn more often to this local folklore than they do to religion in his accounts of his adventures.

It is for this reason that the final chapter of the book is such an unexpected conclusion for the reader, as we discover that Jimín's mother has decided to send him to become a priest. Jimín himself does not appear initially to be against this decision, in spite of the fact that he was not consulted about it in any way, and indeed seems proud of his future vocation as he tells his neighbours that they will be calling him 'Father James' before long.⁸² As the chapter progresses, however, we see Jimín getting gradually more uneasy and apprehensive about leaving his home—'I'm not feeling like myself very much these days and for two pins I wouldn't go there at all'⁸³—and as he nears the end of his final chapter he tells the reader that 'I can barely see the paper I'm writing on for the fits of crying and loneliness'.⁸⁴ It is a sad and disconcerting note for such a fun and light-hearted story to end on, and while it is an extremely effective way for the author to show that childhood is a temporary state and that all children must grow up, it casts a slight pall over the entire story.

In spite of An Seabhac's involvement in the War of Independence, as mentioned above, militant nationalism only really comes to the fore in one chapter in *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, namely 'Mar do chuir Jimín spiaire i dteannta'.⁸⁵ The chapter starts rather abruptly with the following statement from the narrator:

Come here and listen, and don't tell a living soul. I'm a soldier. On my soul it is no lie. I'm in the Irish army and I'm learning lots about soldiering. I do be turning right and turning left and turning back and hitting my heels together.⁸⁶

He goes on to describe his and the other village youngsters' attempts to keep an eye out for anything odd in their community and thus to root out spies. The boys' whole-hearted dedication to their assumed roles as

spy-catchers, of course, is quite an endorsement of nationalist values, as is the actual role of Tadhg Óg, a character much-respected by Jimín and by other members of the community, as a Volunteer.

On the other hand, the light mockery with which An Seabhac describes Jimín's attempts at being a soldier, as well as the fact that the only 'spy' the boys encounter turns out to be only a chicken thief, undermine slightly the boys' dedication to the nationalist movement. Likewise, though passed off by Jimín as the blindness of old women who like to complain, An Seabhac's description of the attitude of the local women to the War of Independence is noteworthy:

My mother is a bad one for encouraging anyone to be a soldier for Ireland – quite bad, and all of the old women are like that, because when they are gathered around the fire in the houses, they have not the slightest issue with criticising the people who are bothering the government “who are so strong, my dear,” and “maybe the pension from them will stop” and “there is no chance at all that England will let go its grip of Ireland.” That's the kind of talk they engage in. But it's best to let them on – the poor things don't know any better. They are blind, poor creatures!⁸⁷

While Jimín disregards the women's opinions, the reader's awareness of Jimín's own lack of real knowledge of these affairs, as well as his tendency to often misinterpret the motivations of those around him, cast some doubt on his judgement in this case. The women's objections to the efforts of the Volunteers, so casually dismissed by Jimín, also hint that An Seabhac wished to convey the complexity of the situation to his young readers, and provides a stark contrast to Pádraig Ó Bróithe's glorification of the war in *Na Rudai Beaga*: 'Ireland, my little country / I will always love you / Fighting on your behalf / I would be glad to die'.⁸⁸

An Seabhac's construction of Irish childhood in *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, as demonstrated above, is complex and layered, especially when compared to constructions of that childhood in other Irish-language texts for children in that period. While clearly set in the independence period, and depicting a rural, Catholic community that on the whole is supportive of the nationalist movement, *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* does not blatantly try to inculcate those values in its readers, but instead invites questioning and doubt. This decision of An Seabhac's to avoid overt didacticism but instead encourage an understanding of the complexity of these issues was likely grounded in his espousal of the methodologies of child-centred education, as discussed by Nic Congáil.⁸⁹

Child-centred education, which was becoming increasingly popular when An Seabhac was teaching and writing, privileges play, exploration and discovery over rote learning, and Nic Congáil has analysed how these methodologies influenced An Seabhac both as an educator and a writer for children.⁹⁰

CONCLUSION

There is a fascinating contrast between the types of children's literature produced in the Irish language before and after the foundation of An Gúm in 1926. In the period preceding An Gúm's foundation, there were very few Irish-language books published for children, especially books that were intended for entertainment rather than language instruction. Those that were published, however, by the likes of the Gaelic League, Cólucht Foillsighthe Dáibhis and the Educational Company of Ireland, displayed a keen awareness of the didactic potential of children's literature and its ability to shape children's perception of the world around them, and contained constructions of Irish childhood that were intended to inculcate certain values in readers. Amongst those values were a reverence for traditional rural life, a respect for Catholicism and Catholic teachings, and an advocacy of nationalism. In contrast, those values are conspicuously absent from the majority of the children's books published by An Gúm in its early years. The reason for this absence, as discussed above, was a lack of appreciation in An Gúm of the socialising function of children's literature.

The Irish-language children's books published between 1910 and 1940, therefore, can be effectively divided into two groups: those in which the socialising function of children's literature was overtly privileged and which sought to promote certain values in young readers, and those whose authors/translators and publishers viewed them first and foremost as a means to teach the language, and as a result were unconcerned with their content, except on a superficial level. An Seabhac's *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, however, does not fit into either of these two groups. An Seabhac, as an educator, was clearly aware of the influence children's reading material can have over their perception of the world, yet unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not seek to use *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* for political ends. Instead, he constructed a realistic image of Irish childhood, that, while in keeping with the ideologies of the time, also subtly questions those ideologies on occasion, as the best books for children do.

NOTES

1. Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3.
2. M.O. Grenby, 'The Origins of Children's Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. M.O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.
3. Róna Nic Congáil, 'Young Ireland and *The Nation*: Nationalist Children's Culture in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Éire-Ireland* 46, no. 3 and 4 (Fómhar/Geimhreadh 2011): 37–62; Michael Flanagan, "'Tales Told in the Turflight": The Christian Brothers, *Our Boys* and the Representation of Gaelic Authenticity in the Popular Culture of the Irish Free State', in *Young Irelands: Studies in Children's Literature*, ed. Mary Shine Thompson (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), 57–66; Janette Condon, 'Children's Books in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', in *The Big Guide 2: Irish Children's Books*, eds. Valerie Coghlan and Celia Keenan (Dublin: Children's Books Ireland, 2000), 53–59.
4. Condon, 'Children's Books', 56.
5. Nic Congáil, 'Young Ireland', 37–62; Flanagan, 'Tales Told in the Turflight', 57–66; Condon, 'Children's Books', 53–59.
6. Flanagan, 'Tales Told in the Turflight', 58.
7. Robert Dunbar, 'Ireland and Its Children's Literature', in *Children's Literature and National Identity*, ed. Margaret Meek (Stoke-on-Trent, England and USA: Trentham Books, 2001), 84.
8. Flanagan, 'Tales Told in the Turflight', 59.
9. Equivalent to Prime Minister.
10. Dunbar, 'Ireland and Its Children's Literature', 84.
11. Pádraig Ó Siocfhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* (Baile Átha Cliath: Maunsel agus Roberts, Teo., 1921).
12. Máire Ní Chinnéide, 'Leabhra don Aos Óg: Ceist Mhór le Socrú', *Misneach* 3 (August 1921) 3 and 5 ['Books for Young People: A Big Issue to be Solved'].
13. Tadhg Ó Donnchadha, *An tÁilleán* (Baile Átha Cliath: Connradh na Gaedhilge, 1902) [*The Plaything* or *The Doll*].
14. W.P. Ryan (Uilleam Ua Riain), *Sidheoga ag obair* (Baile Átha Cliath: Connradh na Gaedhilge, 1903) [*Fairies at Work*].
15. Gearóidín Uí Laighléis, 'An Gúm: scéal agus scéalaíocht', in *Aistí ag iompar Scéil: In Ómós do Shéamus P. Ó Mórdha*, ed. Breandán Ó Conaire (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar Tta., 2004), 185.
16. Ó Donnchadha, *An tÁilleán*, 2 [Original Irish text: Cuimhnighidh gur i nÉirinn do rugadh sibh; gur cheart dúinn ár ndícheall do dhéanamh a son

Éireann; maireamhaint 7 bás d'fagháil i nÉirinn; agus ó's í an Ghaedhilg ár dTeanga féin, í labhairt i gcomhnuidhe. Dia go deóidh libh, a chairde agus Beannacht libh].

17. Ryan, 'Tír gan Fás', in *Sídhheoga ag Obair*, 17–22 ['A Country with No Growth'].
18. Pádraig Ó Bróithe, *Na Rudaí Beaga* (Baile Átha Cliath: Cólucht Foillsighthe Dáibhis, n.d.) [*The Little Things*].
19. While there is no date on the book itself, Máiréad Ní Chinnéide references it in her survey of Irish-language children's literature, 'Leabhra don Aos Óg: Ceist Mhór le Socrú' (page 3) in *Misneach* on August 3, 1921. It also mentions the Irish Volunteers, an organisation established in 1913, and therefore must have been published some time between those two years.
20. Ó Bróithe, *Na Rudaí Beaga*, 2 [Original Irish text: Dáil Éireann abú! / Ní fada uainn an lá / Go gcuirfidh siad náimhde ár dtíre ar lár].
21. Ó Bróithe, *Na Rudaí Beaga*, 2 [Original Irish text: A Éire, mo thírín / mo ghrádh thú go bráth / Ag troid ar do shon-sa / budh gheal liom an bás].
22. Ó Bróithe, *Na Rudaí Beaga*, 3 [Original Irish text: An Ghaedhealg bhinn bhlasta, ní'l teanga san tsaoghal / Chomh huasal, chomh ceolmhar le teanga na nGaedhealg].
23. Ó Bróithe, *Na Rudaí Beaga*, 5 [Original Irish text: An Nodlaig, an t-am / a bhíonn áthas im chroidhe / An lá san do tháinig / san saoghal Íosa Críost].
24. Ó Bróithe, *Na Rudaí Beaga*, 6 [Original Irish text: Ógláich na hÉireann / go mairidh siad slán / Chun saoirse a thabhairt / go dtí Inis Fáil].
25. Ó Bróithe, *Na Rudaí Beaga*, 8 [Original Irish text: An tigín seo 'gainne / ar chliathán an tsléibh' / Dob fhearr liom ná caisleán ár dtigín beag féin].
26. Róisín Ní Mhianáin, 'Réamhrá', in *Idir Lúibíní: Aistí ar an Léitheoireacht agus ar an Litearthacht*, ed. Róisín Ní Mhianáin (Baile Átha Cliath: Cois Life, 2003), 15.
27. Joe Steve Ó Neachtain, 'Dar Mhionn an Leabhair', in *Idir Lúibíní: Aistí ar an Léitheoireacht agus ar an Litearthacht*, ed. Róisín Ní Mhianáin (Baile Átha Cliath: Cois Life, 2003), 49.
28. Dónall P. Ó Baoill, 'An Léitheoireacht agus an Ghaeltacht', in *Idir Lúibíní: Aistí ar an Léitheoireacht agus ar an Litearthacht*, ed. Róisín Ní Mhianáin (Baile Átha Cliath: Cois Life, 2003), 60.
29. Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881–1921: Ideology and Innovation* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 13.
30. Philip O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State 1922–1939* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 13.

31. Pádraig Ó Conaire, 'An Fhírinne agus an Bhréag sa Litridheacht', *Fáinne an Lae*, 12 Bealtaine, 1923, 6.
32. Shán Ó Cuív, *Sgéalta ón Radio* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1931) [*Stories from the Radio*].
33. Padraic Colum, *Mac Rí na hÉireann*, trans. Niall Ó Domhnaill (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1935) [*The King of Ireland's Son*].
34. Padraic Colum, *Mac-Ghníomhartha Fhinn Uí Dbomhnaill*, trans. Niall Ó Domhnaill (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1934) [*The Boyhood Deeds of Fionn Ó Domhnaill*].
35. Charles Kingsley, *Na Laochra*, trans. Máire Ní Mhurchadha (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1933) [*The Heroes*].
36. Padraic Colum, *Clann Odín*, trans. Seán Óg Mac Maoláin (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1936) [*The Children of Odin*].
37. An Gúm in its early years chose to commission many translations for adults and for children, as it was seen as a quick and easy way to provide Irish-language books, and, in the case of children's literature, the amount of original works being submitted was deemed 'negligible' (An Gúm File G369, 'Leabhra don Aos Óg', National Archives of Ireland).
38. *Sunny Days*.
39. An Gúm File G369, 'Leabhra don Aos Óg', National Archives of Ireland.
40. The primary translators for the *Laethanta Gréine* series were Domhnall Ó Cearbhaill, Tadhg Ó Súilleabháin and Brighid Ní Loingsigh.
41. An Gúm File G369, 'Leabhra don Aos Óg'.
42. Enid Blyton, *Eachtra Brocaire*, trans. Various translators (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1934), 22 [*A Terrier's Adventure*].
43. Enid Blyton, *An tIarla Éamonn agus an Sladaidhe*, trans. Various translators (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1932) [*Earl Éamonn and the Plunderer*].
44. An Gúm File G021, '[Sunny Stories] Laetheanta Gréine Newnes Series', National Archives of Ireland [Original Irish text: 'Seo an rud so le cur go dtí an clódóir. Nílím sásta i n-ao' chor leis ach tá sé ró dhéannach anois bheith ag gabháil do mar scéal. Nár chóir gurbh iad na scríbhneoirí ba chliste againn a cuirfí ag gabháil do leabhraibh i gcomhair leanbhaí?'].
45. An Gúm File G020, 'Sunny Stories Eagarthóireacht agus Promhthaí Vol. I', National Archives of Ireland [Original Irish text: 'Ní miste don Roinn a thuigsint go bhfuil an t-adhbhar so gan mhaith, tá an Ghaedhilg go lag ann d'éis ar deineadh de dheisiú air, agus, níl aon chruth curtha ar an gcainnt a dhéanfadh oiriúnach do leanbhaí í'].

46. Róisín Adams, 'Marion King agus an Gúm: Forbairt Litríocht Ghaeilge na nÓg i mBlianta Luatha an Ghúim', in *Laethanta Gréine & Oícheanta Sá: Aistí ar Litríocht agus ar Chultúr na nÓg*, eds. Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn and Riona Nic Congáil (Baile Átha Cliath: *Leabhair* COMHAR, 2013), 102.
47. Frederick Marryat, *Páistí na Nua-Fhoraoise*, trans. Proinsias Ó Brógáin (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1933) [*The Children of the New Forest*].
48. Marryat, *Páistí na Nua-Fhoraoise*, 315 [Original Irish text: 'Níor chuala mé dadaidh iongantach ... Tá fhios agam go bhfuil Cromwell thall in Éirinn, agus deir siad go bhfuil ag éirghe leis go maith, ach níor bhac mé mórán le mion-chunntais'].
49. Hans Dominik, *Seán Workmann*, trans. Pádraig Ó Moghráin. Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1933) [*John Workmann*].
50. The original German version was first published in multiple volumes.
51. Hans Dominik, *Seán Workmann*, 228 [Original Irish text: 'i gcomórtas leis an anró a d'fhulaing sé ar ghabháltas a athara in Éirinn b'shin saoghal duine uasail a bhí aige!'].
52. An Gúm File A0034, "John Workmann". Pádraic Ó Móghráin, National Archives of Ireland.
53. E.D. Laborde, *Sgéalta Ríogh na nGaoth*, trans. Pádraig Ó Moghráin (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1941) [*The Tales of the King of the Wind*].
54. An Gúm File A0380, 'Tales of the Wind King', National Archives of Ireland [Original Irish text: "Ó thosach go deireadh níl ann acht 'propaganda' impreamhail..."].
55. J.M. Barrie, *Tír na Deó*, trans. Máiréad Ní Ghráda (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1938) [*The Land of Forever* or *The Land of Never*].
56. The payment for original works at the time was £1 per 1000 words, but an Gúm decided to offer between £1.10 and £2 per 1000 words to authors for children because of the 'special character required' (An Gúm File G170, 'Leabhra Gaedhilge don Aos Óg (applications & inquiries)/ Original Book for Young People (Question of offering special inducements to Writers)', National Archives of Ireland).
57. Riona Nic Congáil, 'An Seabhadh agus Tionchar an Oideachais Leanbhlarraigh', in *Rí na Gréine: Aistí i gCuimhne ar An Seabhadh*, eds. Deirdre Ní Loingsigh, Lesa Ní Mhunghaile and Ríonach uí Ógáin (Baile Átha Cliath: An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann, 2015), 66.
58. 'The Hawk'—Ó Sióchfhradha was apparently given this nickname as a result of the speed with which he moved around as a travelling teacher ('Ó Sióchfhradha, Pádraig (1883–1894)', Ainm.i.e.: An Bunachar Náisiúnta Beathaisnéisí Gaeilge, accessed 21 December, 2017, <https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=783>).

59. A Gaeltacht area is an area where Irish is the first language of a significant number of the people. A breac-Ghaeltacht is an area that contains a mix of Irish- and English-speaking districts.
60. An organiser of Irish-language events.
61. ‘Ó Siochfhradha, Pádraig (1883–1894)’, Ainm.i.e.: An Bunachar Náisiúnta Beathaisnéisí Gaeilge, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=783>.
62. John Borgonovo, ‘An Seabhac: The Revolutionary, 1914–1922’, in *Rí na Gréine: Aistí i gCuimhne ar An Seabhac*, eds. Deirdre Ní Loingsigh, Lesa Ní Mhunghaile and Ríonach uí Ógáin (Baile Átha Cliath: An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann, 2015), 172.
63. Brian Mac Maghnúis, ‘In Oiriúint do Pháistí Scoile: Leagan Scoile an tSeabhaic de *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*’, in *Thar an Tairseach: Aistí ar Litríocht agus ar Chultúr na nÓg*, eds. Róisín Adams, Claire Marie Dunne agus Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn (Baile Átha Cliath: LeabhairCOMHAR, 2014), 20.
64. *Jimín*: A New Edition of *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* specially prepared for schools. The differences between this edition and *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* (1921) have been discussed in depth by Brian Mac Maghnúis (2014). All references to *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg* in this essay are references to the edition published for the general public in 1921.
65. Mac Maghnúis, ‘In Oiriúint do Pháistí Scoile’, 20–21.
66. Ó Siochfhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 31–32.
67. Ó Siochfhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 73–77.
68. Ó Siochfhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 91–101.
69. Mac Maghnúis, ‘In Oiriúint do Pháistí Scoile’, 22.
70. Eilís Dillon, ‘Réamhrá’, in *The Lucky Bag: Classic Irish Children’s Stories*, eds. Eilís Dillon, Pat Donlon, Patricia Egan and Peter Fallon (Dublin: The O’Brien Press, 1984), 76.
71. As Brian Mac Maghnúis has pointed out, it is significant that the 1921 school edition was renamed simply *Jimín*, and so the significance and symbolism of the Gaeltacht naming tradition was lost, and with it the hint towards the importance of the mother-son relationship in the text. Mac Maghnúis, ‘In Oiriúint do Pháistí Scoile’, 22.
72. O’Leary, *Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*, 159.
73. O’Leary, *Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*, 160.
74. Peadar Ó hAnnracháin, ‘Jimín Mháire Thaidhg’, *Misneach*, November 26, 1921, 3 [Original Irish text: Nuair a bhí Jimín á scrí aige chiméad sé lucht na leabhar agus lucht na cathrach agus gach lucht eile ná tuigean lucht na tuaithe tamall maith lastall den abhainn uaidh. Is beag ná habradh sé leis féin, nuair a mhachtnuigheadh sé go mbéadh cuid acu súd

thall ag léigh Jimín – ‘Muise na haindeiseóirí bochta nach mór an díol truaighe iad gan aon bhun-colas acu ar an saoghal simplí draoidheachtach so againne!’].

75. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 49.
76. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 49 [Original Irish text: ‘An mór an spré a thairrig Peats duit, a Mháire?’ arsa Mam. ‘Thairrig, a chroidhe’, arsa Máire, ‘cúig céad púnt slán, agus nach orainn a bheadh an seans an méid sin airgid do bhualadh an doras isteach chughainn. Ní chuirfinn a chathú go bráth díom dá scaoilinn uaim é’].
77. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 103 [Original Irish text: ‘chun seirbhíse Dé’].
78. A *cliambain isteach* was a husband who moved into his wife’s family home after their marriage.
79. Mac Maghnúis, ‘In Oiriúint do Pháistí Scoile’, 23–24.
80. Mac Maghnúis, ‘In Oiriúint do Pháistí Scoile’, 24.
81. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 99 [Original Irish text: ‘Ní beag do a luaithe a mhúinfidh an saoghal do gur chun cruatainn a rugadh sinn’].
82. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 105.
83. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 106 [Original Irish text: ‘Ní ró mhaith atáim i n-ao’ chor istigh liom féin na laetheannta so agus ar dhá bhiorán ní raghainn i n-ao’ chor ann’].
84. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 107 [Original Irish text: ‘Ní mór go bhfeicim féin an páipéar so go bhfuilim ag scríobh air le gach ‘ra racht guil agus uaignis’].
85. How Jimín caught a spy.
86. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 67 [Original Irish text: ‘Fuspar i leith, ná hinnis d’aonne ‘á rugadh é. Táim-se im’ shaighdiúir. Ar mh’anam ná fuil aon bhréag ann. I n-arm na hÉireann atáim agus mé ag foghlaim na saighdiúireachta go tiugh. Bím ag iompó deiseal agus ag iompó clé agus ag iompó ar ais agus ag bualadh mo shál le n-a chéile’].
87. Ó Siocfhhradha (An Seabhac), *Jimín Mháire Thaidhg*, 67–68 [Original Irish text: ‘Is olc an sás mo mháthair chun misneach a chur ar aonne a bheith ‘na shaighdiúir ar son na hÉireann – is olc san, agus tá na sean-amhná go léir mar sin, mar nuair a bhíd siad bailithe timpeall na teine ins na tighthe, ní théigheann aon laghad ortha ach ag cáineadh na ndaoine atá ag cur isteach ar an ngobhermint ‘atá chomh láidir, a chroidhe’, agus ‘b’éidir gurab amhlaidh a stopfaí an pinsiun uatha féin’, agus ‘ná fuil aon tseans go deo go mbogfadh an Sasannach a ghreim i nÉirinn.’ Sin é an saghas cainnte bhíonn aca san. Ach b’fhearr scaoileadh leo – níl fios a mhalairt age sna rudaí bochta. Táid dall, mo ghraidhn iad!’].

88. Ó Bróithe, *Na Rudaí Beaga*, 2 [Original Irish text: A Éire, mo thírín / mo ghrádh thú go bráth / Ag troid ar do shon-sa / budh gheal liom an bás].
89. Nic Congáil, 'An Seabhac', 47–70.
90. Nic Congáil, 'An Seabhac', 47–70.



‘For Children or Nuns’: Language and Ideology in Irish-Language Translations and Retellings for Children, 1922–1940

Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn

The early twentieth century saw a particularly prolific period of translation into Irish. The newly independent Irish Free State, set up in 1922, had established several schemes to promote and foster the Irish language. One of its first policies was the implementation of Irish as a compulsory school subject in national schools from St Patrick’s Day 1922, a scheme which ostensibly meant that there would be a new demand for books for children and young people. In order to cater for this new market, the government established An Gúm, an Irish-language publishing house, in 1926. In its early years, An Gúm introduced a controversial but productive regime of translation as a way to produce Irish-language reading material quickly and cheaply. The policy was beset with criticism from the beginning: detractors found fault with the quality of the source-language books, the quality of the translations and the fact that so many translated books were being published as opposed to original work.

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The translation scheme was officially abandoned in 1939, by which time well over two hundred translated texts had been published: a new and substantial corpus of texts had been created, and a child readership, whether imagined or real, had been constructed.

The types of texts that were chosen to translate were rather diverse in terms of authors and subject matter, but several strands that are worth studying emerge. In the infancy of the Free State, it is perhaps not surprising that An Gúm produced texts based on folklore and traditional tales: as Jaya Bhattacharji points out, ‘folklore has been like the cultural bedrock that people turn to, especially in times when there seems to be an attempt or a movement to define “national literature”’.¹ More unexpected is the appearance of British boys’ adventure stories with a distinctly colonial outlook such as R.M. Ballantyne’s *Coral Island* and Rider Haggard’s *The People of the Mist* in the Irish language. This chapter intends to examine the sometimes conflicting ideologies that can be seen in the Irish-language corpus of translation in this period, along with the interplay between language and ideology in the construction of an Irish(-language) childhood.

It is worth noting that the vast majority of texts translated in this period were translated from English. In a period in which Ireland was redefining itself as independent from and, crucially, as different from England, it is curious that translations from English were so prevalent. There were practical reasons for this, of course: translators with mastery of both Irish and English were easier to find than those with knowledge of other languages, as English was the language of the majority of the population, but this also meant that the Irish readership already had access to the original English texts, and were more likely to read them in English than in translation. This was, of course, part of the reason for the antagonism towards the translation scheme, but there were also ideological concerns: Philip O’Leary has stated that ‘wide-scale translation, the deliberate, state-sponsored infusion into the language and its literature of foreign ideas, images and attitudes was bound to be controversial’.² English texts were considered foreign by many, especially as some of them depicted colonial attitudes which were anathema to prevalent Irish values, and these attitudes and ideas were being bolstered and reinforced in Irish translation. However, the appropriation of English-language texts was also a sign of confidence in the Irish language’s ability to retell modern and classic texts that already had a certain prestige and status.

Furthermore, to translate Anglo-Irish texts into Irish was, in effect, to reappropriate some of Ireland's own stories, Gaelicizing texts that had previously been written in or of Ireland. These questions of language, identity, and ideology were frequently raised in the discourse surrounding the creation of an Irish-language corpus for children, as will be seen below.

CATHOLICISM AND CENSORSHIP

Religious identity, in particular, played a crucial role in the new state, and there were many who held '[the] belief that Gaelic culture was inherently Catholic'.³ The publishing industry in the Free State was, of course, subject to the notorious literary censorship of this period, and, as Brian Kennedy notes, 'Catholicism, the declared religion of 93% of the population, was the fundamental credo behind the censorship laws'.⁴ Renowned writer, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, claimed that the Irish-language publishing industry was stricter still, stating: 'Under this soviet organization of literature two censorships operated, the ordinary state censorship and a special *Gúm* censorship which presumed that everything that was to be written in Irish was for children or nuns'.⁵ Some evidence of this attitude can be seen in An Gúm's correspondence from the period: books were often submitted to priests to judge the material's suitability. Indeed, editors seemed exceptionally circumspect in terms of moral questions when choosing texts to translate: one boys' adventure novel entitled *Adventure Island* which was authored by a priest, Fr. McGrath, was actually rejected as a suitable text for translation on the following grounds:

[The characters] in the book are Catholics *comme il faut*, and for this reason there can be no more wholesome reading material available. Looking at the book from another angle, however, it is not so wholesome as in my opinion, it won't do the young people of this country any good to read too much about "gunnery". I don't know what teachers and the legal profession will make of this, but it seems to me that this kind of reading does them more harm than good.⁶

Other texts that weren't aimed at children were rejected on moral grounds as well, including Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tales*:

I don't think this story would be suitable for translation into Irish. There is *inter alia* too much reference in it – some of it implicit and some explicit – *aux filles de joie* and their profession.⁷

Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* was also subject to such criticism:

This is one of the most famous English books published in 1927. There is a bit in it, however, about Religion and Religious people that a lot of Irish readers would not like, and as well as that, there is a lot of description of things that violate the Sixth Commandment. The book should be submitted to a Priest to get a definitive judgement in terms of moral questions before it is placed on a list of translatable Books.⁸

Such questions of morality and ideology were often pivotal in decisions concerning the most suitable texts to translate, and these issues were also considered noteworthy in many of the contemporary reviews of the translations.

The supposed norms of the target audience also came to the fore in discussions of translation methodologies. A translation of Lew Wallace's *The Fair God* was published in 1935, and the translator, Mícheál Ó Gríobhtha, wrote a note to *An Gúm* in 1930, saying that he wished to 'tweak' a couple of paragraphs in the book 'to make them suitable for the mind of the good Christian':⁹

For example, the Spaniards ejaculating Jesú Christ and such like. There is also a reference to the Virgin Mary and the Holy Sacrament on page 433 of the book that people wouldn't like, and it would need to be toned down. ... I fear that if the oaths and the paragraph on page 433 were translated properly that the book would not be accepted in schools.¹⁰

While *An Gúm*'s texts were not all aimed specifically at children, the possibility of having a book used in schools (which would, of course, boost sales figures) was clearly also an important consideration for translators in choosing texts, and in their linguistic choices when translating as well.

Ó Cadhain's assertion that everything had to be suitable for children and nuns therefore seems to hold true in some cases, and the idea that 'the [Irish] language itself [was] inextricably linked with a uniquely Irish version of the Roman Catholic faith'¹¹ permeates much of the discourse

of the period. This ideology was not concerned solely with children's reading material, as some of the previous examples illustrate, but a distinctly Catholic bias can be seen in the attitudes towards the child readers and in the concept of childhood constructed in the translations.

TRANSLATION FROM IRISH TO ENGLISH, AND BACK AGAIN

The question of the source-language of translated texts was a controversial one, and some of the practical and ideological issues with translation from English have been considered above, but not all translations from English imported 'foreign' ideas and attitudes. An interesting feature of the corpus of this period is the number of stories that were translations of English-language retellings of Irish stories, written by authors such as Thomas Crofton Croker, Standish O'Grady, Padraic Colum and Edmund Leamy.¹² Many of these stories constructed 'Irishness' from the outside, portraying an Irish identity that was distinctively 'Other', and marketed outside Ireland for the most part. These authors' appropriation of Irishness can be seen to some extent as a colonial enterprise that foreignized the Irish (however nationalistic the intentions), and the act of translating such texts back into Irish was therefore an act of reclamation and reappropriation. While the contemporary reviews of these translations were generally very positive, internal correspondence from An Gúm's archives sheds light on the ambivalent attitude that some of the editors had towards these texts and the rationale for their translation.

In 1939, a collection of stories from Thomas Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* was translated by Brighid Ní Loingsigh under the title *Siobhraí na mBeann agus na nGleann*. The original collection had been very popular when it was first published in 1825; the Grimm brothers translated the text to German the following year, and it had been critically acclaimed. Later criticism was not so generous: the depiction of the Irish population as 'peasants' in particular was problematic in a postcolonial age, and B.G. MacCarthy's 1943 article is scathing in its criticism of Croker's work and particularly his use of the term 'peasants':

[R]esentment is the mildest emotion we can feel ... the people to whom the word was applied were really a conglomerate of many classes of society – all forced by pressure from above into an apparent sameness of poverty and menial employments.¹³

MacCarthy went on to criticize Croker's 'deliberate blindness and the lacunae in his knowledge' his attitude to the Catholic Church, characterized as 'the superstition of the Romish Church' and his lack of Irish: 'he seems incapable of writing even the simplest Irish words correctly'.¹⁴ Of course, *Siobhraí na mBeann agus na nGleann* appeared in print before MacCarthy's article, but it is interesting to note that the work provoked such indignation just a few years later.

Some ambivalence towards the text can be seen in An Gúm's correspondence. Tomás Ó hEighneacháin, one of the editors, put a list together of the stories from the original work that he deemed unsuitable for translation. 'The Young Piper', 'The Brewery of Eggshells' and 'The Changeling' are among the texts which appear on this list, all of which are changeling stories. Presumably the abuse given to the changeling children in these tales was considered unsuitable reading material for children; an example from 'The Changeling': 'The wise woman told her in a whisper not to give it enough to eat, and to beat and pinch it without mercy, which Mary Scannell did'.¹⁵ In the end, the Irish-language version of Croker's text contained just eleven stories, compared with the original's thirty-eight.¹⁶

Having excluded the stories he deemed unsuitable for translation, Ó hEighneacháin was still worried about the book's content and noted, 'Since we're translating this book for children, I would recommend that we send a copy of the proofs to a member of the clergy'.¹⁷ Strangely enough, the moral asides in Croker's version are often omitted in the translation, such as, 'The history of Morty Sullivan ought to be a warning to all young men to stay at home, and live decently and soberly if they can, and not to go roving about the world'.¹⁸ Of course, moral messages are not uncommon in books for children, but perhaps Ó hEighneacháin or Ní Loingsigh, the translator, objected to the patronizing tone of such statements. Indeed, Ó hEighneacháin seemed to have a more basic issue with the translation as a whole, and when he compiled his list of unsuitable stories, noted:

This list contains only the ones that I wouldn't recommend at all, but excluding those stories, there are many more that are only Anglo-Irish [Gall-Ghaedhealach], and it would be better in my opinion to have the people's version available rather than the version of the gran-gintry may it please your honor's honor. It would be as well to remove much of this kind of speech, the uisque baugh and the poteen.¹⁹

Of interest is reader Mícheál Ó Gríobhtha's comment on the text;²⁰ he, too, seemed worried about Croker's understanding of Irish folklore and noted, 'I would like to tell her [Ní Loingsigh] not to translate anything outlandish. For example, a salmon wearing a pair of shoes'.²¹ This advice went unheeded, but other amendments to the original text include the correction of Croker's use of placenames. In the original text, 'Knockseogamhna signifies "Hill of the Fairy calf"' ²² is replaced by 'I think this story was composed to explain the meaning of the name of the hill, but "Cnoc Sidhe Eamhna" is its proper name'.²³ Similarly, the Fenian tale, 'The Rock of the Candle' contains a footnote in the translation: 'It is probable that this story was composed to explain the name of the rock, but "Carraig Ó Conaing" is its proper name'.²⁴ It seems an attempt was made to create a corrective text, and some of the problematic elements of the original are mitigated in translation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Croker's quotations from the English canon—Shakespeare, Milton and Spenser—at the beginning of each section are omitted.

Some of Standish O'Grady's works were also translated into Irish this period: the first Irish translation, *Fionn agus a Chuideachta*, was published by the Educational Company of Ireland in 1923. The original, *Finn and his Companions*, was a highly sanitised collection of Fenian tales first published as part of Fisher Unwin's 'Children's Library' series. Philip Marcus has noted that the, 'the youthful potential audience meant that any incidents involving sex or showing the characters in an unfavourable light would have to be cut out'.²⁵ Perhaps this self-censorship on O'Grady's part made it an attractive text for translation. Indeed, the appearance of Saint Patrick in the tales and the noble depiction of the Fenian warriors coincided with the prevalent nationalist and religious ideology of the time: 'Finn, though a Gentile, was nevertheless a prophet without full knowledge, and had prepared the minds of the Gael for the preaching of Christ's gospel'.²⁶ King Arthur also appears in one story as the villain of the piece, a foil to the illustrious Finn, and steals his 'three matchless hounds', which have to be retrieved by Finn and his warriors.

An interesting feature of O'Grady's text is Finn's pseudo-archaic speech: 'My brave Bran, thou hast not done such a deed since the son of the great enchanter Angus Ogue, having a boar's form, was dragged down by thee'.²⁷ This type of register is difficult to render in Irish, as Michael Cronin notes, 'the absence of a standard form of the language ... meant that representing more formal varieties of the language became a daunting task for the translator'.²⁸ In Ó Cionnfhaoila's translation, Finn's

speech is rather blander: “‘A Bhraín Uasail,’ arsa Fionn, “níor dheinis a leithéid de ghníomh ón lá do chlaoidhis Aongus óg nuair do chuir sé cuma toirc air féin le draoidheacht””.²⁹ The othering of the Irish characters cannot be seen to the same extent in the translation. As in Croker’s work, the placenames are also othered—Tech Brac and Erin—as well as the names of the mythical characters such as the ‘Fians’ and the ‘Shee’. The Irish-language version, of course, eradicates this difference.

An Gúm published another one of O’Grady’s works in 1931, the first in his trilogy about the life of Cú Chulainn translated by Father Tomás Ó Gallchobhair as *Teacht Chú Chulainn*.³⁰ According to An Gúm’s archives, the well-known Donegal writer, Seosamh Mac Grianna, was asked to translate another book in the series in 1934, but refused saying:

I think that it would be more advisable to take the original Tain Bo Cuailgne and modernize it. Standish O’Grady’s version is a re-telling of the Tain after the author’s own conception, taken from an English translation of the Tain. I think a native speaker with a taste for the undertaking could get better results by a modernization direct from the Old Gaelic text.

This could scarcely be called a translation. It would involve research (in addition of course to a really clever attempt at style and rhythm) and I think it might be remunerated at the rate for history.

I am awaiting your offer on the undertaking.³¹

It is worth noting that the rate of payment for historical works was higher than the rate for fiction, and it may have been this financial incentive that was motivating Mac Grianna, rather than concern for the story’s integrity. In any case, one of An Gúm’s editors, Tomás Ó hEighneacháin, agreed with Mac Grianna’s objections to the translation, and in the end, neither *The Triumph and Passing of Cuculain* nor *In the Gates of the North* was translated.

Another of An Gúm’s editors, Domhnall Mac Grianna, was also worried about translating stories that were written in English, and based on Irish mythology, back into Irish. Mac Grianna was editing a draft of the translation of *The King of Ireland’s Son* by Padraic Colum when he said:

This sample has been done well and I think N. Ó D. [Niall Ó Domhnaill] will succeed in putting a good finish on the translation. However, it is a pity to waste time and money translating stories that have their origins one way or another in Irish already. They are done well in English, but a lot of

the appeal is to do with this: they are Gaelic stories and that this type of story is not common in English.³²

Colum's original story was first published in the children's pages of the *New York Tribune*,³³ while Colum's text was certainly aimed at children, it seems that American children and immigrants were his target audience. Nevertheless, in An Gúm's correspondence, much is made of the story's suitability for Irish children: 'The subject of the book is probably more suitable for primary-school children than any other book that An Gúm has published'.³⁴ The plot of the original story does seem rather complex: it begins with a common motif, the King of Ireland's son playing cards with a stranger, and when he loses the third game, he has to find out where the stranger lives and remove three hairs from his beard; there are subplots and tellings of other tales intertwined throughout the story as well, such as the Gobán Saor and the Sword of Light. Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin has noted that, 'the nesting of tales within tales is ... alien to the classic fairy tale',³⁵ but, of course, this is not alien to the Irish oral tradition. We have very little evidence about the reading experience of the contemporary young readers, but we can surmise that native Irish speakers were unlikely to have the same reading experience as non-Irish readers, as the form was likely to be familiar to them. The foreignized and distinctively Irish identity constructed in Croker, O'Grady and Colum's works in terms of form, language and ideology was impossible to recreate in the Irish-language translations.

Not all the Irish-language publications of traditional tales in this period were translations from the English, of course. In fact, educational publishing companies were leading the way in retelling traditional stories in Irish, and Ireland's heroes and their exploits were often presented as part of the country's history in school textbooks.³⁶ The Educational Company of Ireland published *Fionn agus a Chuideachta*, mentioned above, as well as a collection of traditional stories retold by Máiréad Ní Ghráda, *An Giolla Deacair agus Scéalta eile* published in 1936. Browne and Nolan published *Fianna Éireann* and *Seoda na Sean* by Tomás Ua Concheanainn and his wife, Helena, in the 1920s, as well as *Scéal na hÉireann don Aos Óg* in 1933, a 'historical' work in which Fr. Dinneen describes Cú Chulainn, Fionn mac Cumhaill and the Fianna, and in which he gives the folkloric account of Conchubhar mac Neasa's death.

It seems clear that Ireland's mythology and folklore was thought to be a suitable corpus from which to mine material for children, and to

present such stories as history in the context of the classroom was considered a legitimate and appropriate framework. It is also worth noting that these translations and retellings of Irish tales did not stray too far from the spirit of the canonical source texts, for the most part. As Philip O'Leary notes:

Gaelic writers seem to have been too much in awe of their cultural heritage to attempt the kind of ironic handling of heroic sources that was in the 1920s and 1930s characteristic of reworkings of the material by authors of Catholic background working in English.³⁷

Knowledge of these tales and their heroic characters was clearly considered essential in the construction of young readers' Irish identity, but ironic or radical retellings of folk tales were not on the agenda.

TRANSLATING THE INTERNATIONAL: *KINDER- UND HAUSMÄRCHEN*

Traditional Irish stories were not the only stories that were retold in this period, of course. Grimms' tales are among the most retold traditional tales in the world, and several Irish-language publications mined this collection for source material. Two collections of Grimm stories were published in the 1920s, the first one by Máire Ní Chinnéide in 1923,³⁸ and the second by Proinnseas Ó Súilleabháin in 1926.³⁹ Seán Mac Giollarnáth also retold two Grimm stories in his collection of tales, *Fí-Fá-Fum*, which was published in 1931.⁴⁰ In 1932, An Gúm set about translating a new edition of the stories, although editor Tomás Ó hEighneacháin noted, 'I wouldn't like to produce a second version of any story that has already been translated'.⁴¹

In February 1933, Seán MacLellan, An Gúm's publications' officer, wrote a letter to Séamus Ó Duilearga, director of the Irish Folklore Institute,⁴² looking for 'a complete edition of Grimms' Kindermarchen [sic] – an unadorned edition without pictures if that is cheaper'.⁴³ Ó Duilearga wrote back to MacLellan, advising,

May I suggest that it is important to place into the hands of Irish children a collection of Irish folktales – animal stories, bird and beast stories, humorous tales, tales from Saints' lives and wonder tales. Our material is more important than the German ... It is certainly amazing to find that

there is no standard collection of Irish tales. I should think you might take this into consideration for inclusion on your programme. Such a book is badly needed by Irish children.⁴⁴

Ó Duilearga's comment indicates an objection to An Gúm's translation policy, which seemed to ignore Irish-language source material. Indeed, the existence of the Irish Folklore Commission, coupled with the reluctance of An Gúm's editors to publish versions of stories that were already in print, accounted for this paucity to some extent. In an internal note, Ó hEigheacháin stated that he didn't wish to publish four traditional stories submitted to An Gúm by Fr. Tomás Ó Cillín, saying that An Gúm was already publishing versions of two out of the four stories, and that:

This sort of story should be sent to the Folklorists, that is why they exist and that is why they are getting money from the government. Now that the Folklore Commission is being established to look after that kind of work, I don't think this Department should interfere with the Commission's affairs.⁴⁵

Of course, Ó Duilearga went on to collect Irish folkloric material from National School children a few years later, when he and Seán Ó Súilleabháin set up *Bailiúchán na Scol/The Schools' Collection*,⁴⁶ and An Gúm went on to translate *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in spite of Ó Duilearga's advice.

Pádraig Ó Moghráin was the translator of this work, a folklore collector and a prolific translator for An Gúm. His correspondence with An Gúm suggests that he translated the Grimm tales from the original German, and 147 of the stories were published in eleven slim volumes, each complete with a colourful illustrated cover.⁴⁷ The correspondence also shows that certain questions arose concerning the suitability of the stories for children: in August 1933, Ó Moghráin wrote to An Gúm saying, 'there aren't as many horrid things [in the stories] as I thought'.⁴⁸ Despite this statement, he was unsure about the suitability of the first story he translated, 'Die Zwie Brüder', or 'The Two Brothers'. This particular story is a hero quest tale, which tells of twin sons who go off to seek their fortune. They split up, and one brother saves a princess from a seven-headed dragon and eventually marries her; one day while out hunting he is detained by an old woman who turns him to stone. The second brother realises he is in danger by means of a magic knife, and

goes out in search of him; when he arrives at his brother's town, he is welcomed as the king and sleeps in his brother's bed, but puts a sword in the bed between himself and the princess. He then manages to find his brother and reverse the witch's curse and they both return home. When the king realises that his brother slept in his bed with his wife, he kills him, but repents soon afterwards and his wife then reveals that his brother had been true. Ó Moghráin sent the translated text to the publishers with a note, saying that, 'I made a little change to the end of the story, as there were bits in it that aren't suitable for young readers'.⁴⁹ It seems that An Gúm's editors agreed with him, and in the following letter, Seán Mac Lellan noted, 'We are afraid that a few small things that you have translated won't do, and, although we are reluctant to do so, they should be omitted entirely'.⁵⁰ The story was not published in the eleven volumes in the end.

Interestingly, while editor Tomás Ó hEighneacháin had reservations concerning the morality of certain texts (see above), it was Ó Moghráin himself who requested that a priest's opinion on the story 'Marienkind' (or 'Leabh Mhuire' as it was translated) be solicited, and he raised questions about the suitability of several others.⁵¹ In these instances, Ó hEighneacháin noted that, 'They are stories about the Devil ... and Saint Peter. Ireland's folklore is full of things that are much "stronger" than these. Perhaps it would be better to omit them in school texts anyway'. He agreed to send it to a priest 'in case there are any questions about it in the future'.⁵²

'Marienkind' was therefore sent to Father E. C. Mac an Bháird to judge the story's suitability for the readership in December 1935. In the original tale, the Virgin Mary adopts a poor young girl when her parents are unable to feed her and she grows up in heaven. One day Mary leaves to go on a journey and leaves the keys to heaven's doors with the girl, warning her not to open the thirteenth door. The girl does not heed the warning and when she opens the door she sees the Trinity. Mary expels the girl after she lies about opening the door; in the end the girl marries a king and has a son, but Mary steals the child until the girl admits that she opened the door. Father Mac an Bháird sent the following reply:

I read this story and it is my opinion that a lot of people would be displeased by it. I am not saying that there is much in it that is facetious or subversive but it is all a little disrespectful of the Virgin Mary. After thinking about it as best I could, I would conclude that it would not be right

to publish it. By the way, most of the story has already been told in Irish – and told very well. It may be found in *An Sgéalaíidhe Ghaedhealach* under the title “Séanadh na mná óige.”⁵³

The story was not included in the translated volumes either, even though the intended readership already had access to a ‘Gaelic’ version (although, of course, it should be noted that this retelling was not aimed at children).

Ó Moghráin self-censored in other instances; for example, some of the characters were altered in the translation: ‘The Devil with three golden hairs’ was translated as ‘Fathach na dtrí bhfionnaí óir’⁵⁴ and another character was changed in ‘The poor man and the rich man’: rather than ‘In olden times, when the dear Lord himself was still wandering the earth among mortals’⁵⁵ the Irish version begins, ‘Bhí naomh ann fadó’.⁵⁶ These choices of a giant rather than the devil, and a saint rather than the Lord, seem to be an attempt to depict the values of the stories as consistent with the norms of the public, in terms of the representation of religious beliefs and characters. Presumably, Ó Moghráin did not wish the stories to be seen by Church authorities, or indeed the Irish public, as ‘facetious or subversive’ in any way, to use Fr. Mac an Bháird’s expression. It seems, then, that great care was taken with stories which made reference to Christianity, or at least, with stories in which there were characters that were important to the Catholic faith.

‘Rapunzel’ was also among the stories that Ó Moghráin found unsuitable for children. Although he was asked to translate it, he declared, ‘I am still of the opinion that it wouldn’t be suitable. It isn’t much certainly, but it could not be changed without making nonsense of the story’.⁵⁷ This note seems to refer to the fact that Rapunzel is impregnated while she is in the tower. Again, moral and religious questions seem to be to the fore here rather than the quality of the story itself, and questions of sexual purity in ‘Rapunzel’ (as in ‘The Two Brothers’) are treated with more concern than other themes in the stories, such as death or violence, which might have been considered problematic for the young readership. No questions were raised regarding the suitability of ‘An Eisléine’ [The Shroud], for example, even though the dead main character in the story utters the following: ‘Och! a mháthair, stad den chaoineadh nó ní bheidh aon tsuaimhneas agam sa gcónra. Bíonn m’eisléine bheag flúich i gcómhnaidhe le do dheora’ [Och, mother, stop crying or I won’t have any peace in the coffin. My little shroud is always wet

with your tears].⁵⁸ In the same way, ‘Bás na Circe Beaga’ [The Death of the Little Hen] and ‘An Bheatha Shíorraidhe’ [The Duration of Life] can both be seen in the Irish-language collection, stories in which all the characters die.

TRANSLATING THE COLONIAL

While it is perhaps not surprising that the fledgling Free State was so interested in folklore and mythology, it is curious that some texts with a clearly colonial message were translated during the same period. Among these texts are Mícheál Ó Cathain’s translation of *The Coral Island* by Scottish author R.M. Ballantyne, a nineteenth-century *robinsonade*;⁵⁹ it was published under the title *An tOileán Corghruanach* in 1939. It is an adventure tale, in which the three main characters are left shipwrecked on an isolated island in the South Pacific; they manage to survive and find food in the hostile environment and meet pirates and ‘natives’ as they try to find a way home.⁶⁰ Indeed, there are several problematic incidents in the text; for example, there is a long passage at the end of Chapter 24 in which the island natives are seen giving their babies as food to their snake-god. This incident was left out of later English-language editions, but the following extract can be found in the Irish-language edition: ‘Seo ceann dá ndéithe agus tá na sgórtha naoidheanán beo tugtha le n-ithe dó cheana féin’ [Here is one of their gods and it has been given scores of infants to eat already].⁶¹ Having said that, at least one sentence has been censored from the Irish version in which the imperialist attitude of the author is clear: ‘Of course we’ll rise, naturally to the top of affairs: white men always do in savage countries’.⁶² Although the translator is happy to translate the barbarism of the island people, he attempts to mitigate the racist attitude of one of the story’s leading characters in translation.

The nobility of the English is often highlighted in the text: ‘Sasanach críochnuighthe thú – an fear is fheárr dár casadh orm in mo shaoghal’⁶³ [You’re a consummate Englishman—the best man I ever met in my life] as well as British patriotism, Seán has a ‘naipcín póca cadáis, a raibh sé cinn déag de phictiúir Nelson air agus Union Jack ina lár’⁶⁴ [a cotton handkerchief with sixteen pictures of Nelson on it and a Union Jack in the middle]. Proselytizing and conversion are also important aspects of the tale, and one character explains that religion turns the ‘savages’ away from cannibalism. Fiachra Éilgeach, one of *An Gúm*’s readers, was in

favour of translating *Coral Island*, but did mention the foreignness of the culture displayed in his internal review of it:

A book in which there are many adventures which would be enjoyable for boys, even if some of them are incredible. It is suitable for translation, in my opinion. There is a good advertisement in it for the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Society, and often excess praise for the Britisher.⁶⁵

A review of the translation in the *Irish News* was also critical of the way religion was presented to the reader in the translation: 'I was surprised to see "sagart" [priest] as a name for the "witchdoctor". It could be that it was priest in the English version, but it is not the same kind as the "sagart" we know in Ireland – or in Irish'.⁶⁶ It was indeed 'priest' that was used in the original text:

At a table inside sat the priest, an elderly man with a long grey beard. He was seated on a stool, and before him lay several knives, made of wood, bone, and splinters of bamboo, with which he performed his office of dissecting dead bodies.⁶⁷

However, it seems clear that this use of 'priest' was not in keeping with the norms of the target culture.

Also of interest are the translations of Rider Haggard's works which were published in the 1930s: *Ise* [She] in 1933; *Máire* [Marie] in 1935; *Croidhe na Cruinne* [The Heart of the World] in 1937; and *Cineadh an Cheó* [The People of the Mist] in 1939. Rider Haggard's writings, and in particular, his problematic depiction of 'native' peoples, have been criticized as 'contribut[ing] to the propaganda of Empire with a literature of adventure, a literature that masked the corruptive greed of imperialism while preserving its popular emotional appeal'.⁶⁸ These stories mostly feature lost tribes and the quest stories of white men in Africa, with the exception of *The Heart of the World*, which is set in Mexico. It is to this type of text that Brian Ó Conchubhair alludes when he notes: 'An Gúm, asserting the Free State's linguistic and cultural independence, reproduces textual tropes and images used to denigrate and subjugate African natives, the very tropes previously used to subjugate the Irish'.⁶⁹

Strangely, Haggard's work does not seem to have caused the same disquiet within An Gúm as the folkloric material did, and there is

little evidence of any concerns articulated in terms of subject matter. The reviews in contemporary periodicals were mixed, however. Of *Ise*, one reviewer said:

She does not have a good reputation. Without making any bones about it, it is an indecent, pagan story. Many awful scenes are described in it, and immoral opinions are often praised – directly or indirectly.⁷⁰

Interestingly, this review condemned the perceived lack of morality, and indeed lack of Christianity, in the text, rather than having any issue with the colonialist attitudes expressed in it.

The People of the Mist is also a surprising choice for translation, an adventure tale in which two brothers go to Africa to seek their fortune, after their disgraced father commits suicide having bankrupted the family estate. The depiction of the African population, in particular the ‘lost tribe’ of the mist, and the paternalistic attitude of the white characters are unquestionably problematic. The translation, *Cineadh an Cheó*, elicited the following review in the *Irish Press*, which made a direct comparison between the Irish and the mysterious tribe of the mist in terms of subjugation: ‘Is there any other literature apart from English literature to draw on for translations? Or do we respect any other culture apart from the culture of England? Perhaps we are the people of the mist in this way’.⁷¹

This was not a universally held opinion, and other reviews were much more positive: *The Irish Times* gave an outline of the plot without value judgement, and indeed praised the translation, saying, ‘This book will attract the reader, young or old, if he is interested in light fiction ... A recommended read’.⁷² Similarly, *The Standard* claimed it was ‘one of the most enjoyable books translated so far’.⁷³ No mention is made of the problematic language of the text. The description of Otter, for example, is particularly problematic:

Otter was a knob-nosed Kaffir, that is of the Bastard Zulu race. The brothers had found him wandering about the country in a state of semi-starvation, and he had served them faithfully for some years. They had christened him Otter, his native patronymic being quite unpronounceable, because of his extraordinary skill in swimming, which almost equalled that of the animal after which he was named.⁷⁴

The translation tones down some of this language by omitting the reference to the 'Bastard Zulu race,' yet transliterates Kaffir as 'Caifear'. The manuscript of the translation is held in the National Archives and sheds some light on the process of editing the manuscript. The reference to the Zulu race was in the original translation, and in a subsequent edit, 'duine de threibh thuilidhe Zulu' has been scored out. Other references to various races have been edited out, including 'an Lochlannach', 'na h-Araibeanagh', 'scata d'fhearaibh dubha lobhtha' and 'Bastardaibh'.⁷⁵ While some attempt was clearly made to curtail some of the problematic elements of the text, the paternalistic bias of the text is irrefutable. Otter declares to Leonard:

Are you not my father and my mother, and is not the place where you may be my place? Do you know what I was going to do just now, Baas? I was going to climb to the top of a tree and watch the Steam-fish till it vanished over the edge of the world; then I would have taken this rope, which already has served me well among the People of the Mist, and set it about my throat and hanged myself there in the tree, for that is the best end for old dogs, Baas.⁷⁶

While the term 'Baas' is not translated, the rest of Otter's sentiments are. The reproduction of imperialist attitudes goes unchecked for the most part in this translation.

CONCLUSION

The reviews of the period in newspapers and periodicals were somewhat more critical of the imperial texts than of the works based on traditional stories, but An Gúm's internal correspondence raised few questions about the suitability of colonial texts. It is also noteworthy that even in the more critical reviews, there is no strong identification with the subjugated populations of the fictional works. In fact, the prevailing ideology seems to be that of de-Anglicization, and an objection to translating from English, rather than opposing the colonial enterprise on a wider scale. A conspicuous example of this can be seen in a note from An Gúm to Olive Cunningham, the illustrator of the book wrapper of *Croidhe na Cruinne* requesting that 'Sir' be deleted from the author's name,⁷⁷ again, demonstrating a preoccupation with toning down the Englishness

of the text, rather than dealing with the much more problematic issues of the text itself.

Alongside this rejection of Englishness is, of course, a reliance on English-language texts as source material, including English-language material that had appropriated Irish culture. Many of An Gúm's writers and editors recognized some of the problems involved in translating these texts, but it is likely that the sanitized nature of the folkloric texts, in particular, was appealing to them as any adaptation work that might have been deemed necessary was already done. The corpus of retold folklore from this period is not as extensive as might have been expected in the early years of independence. Concerns about the suitability of the tales for children, and the establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission in this period (an organization which was also in receipt of government funding), account, to some extent, for this dearth of traditional Irish tales.

Of course, there was another basic impetus behind the torrent of translations published between 1922 and 1940: translating popular and classic works of fiction proved that Irish was a modern language capable of supplying its readership with a wide range of texts and themes, even if there was not yet much of a tradition of original novel-writing. As Ó Conchubhair points out:

As the embodiment of the Free State's Irish-language revival project, [the books An Gúm published] were designed and produced as impressive weighty and sturdy tomes destined for longevity and prominent display.⁷⁸

Haggard's work in particular seems to fit this description, with several reviewers mentioning the length of the translations: *Western People* noting that *The Heart of the World* was 'twice the length of an ordinary novel' and *The Standard* remarking on the seven hundred pages of *The People of the Mist*.⁷⁹ In fact, this criterion of length was seen as so important that one retelling of the folk tale 'The Children of Lir' was rejected on the basis that An Gúm didn't usually print books of less than one hundred pages.⁸⁰ Again, concern with the appearance of the material seems to take precedence over the substance of the story.

While the colonial stories and the folk tales at first seem radically opposed to one another in terms of ideology, many of the same concerns can be seen in the discourse surrounding the translation of these texts: the extent to which the texts conformed to the prevailing moral and

religious values of the time, and the extent to which the texts created and strengthened an Irish identity. Many of the writings examined here seem to conceptualize Irish-language readers as Catholic boys, who should not be exposed to any type of 'immorality' or ideas that could corrupt their Catholicism or Irishness, but we have little evidence that shows how, or indeed if, this literature was read at the time by young readers.

NOTES

1. Jaya Bhattacharji, 'Folklore and Children's Literature', *Indian Folklife* 21 (April 2006): 3.
2. Philip O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State 1922–1939* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004), 386.
3. *Ibid.*, 66.
4. Brian P. Kennedy, *Dreams and Responsibilities: The State and the Arts in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Criterion Press, 1990), 14.
5. Máirtín Ó Cadhain, 'Irish Prose in the Twentieth Century', in *Literature in the Celtic Countries*, ed. J.E. Caerwyn Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971), 147.
6. 'Caitilicigh *comme il faut* atá sa leabhar seo agus dá bhrí sin ní fhéadfa abhar léightheoireachta níos folláine fháil. Ag breathnú ar an leabhar ó thaobh eile, ámh, níl sé chó folláin sin ar fad mar sin im' thuairimse ní dhéanann sé aon mhaitheas do ghasúir óga na tíre seo an iomarca a léigheamh faoi 'ghunnadóireacht.' Níl a fhios agam cén tuairim atá ag múinteoirí scoile agus lucht dlí faoin gceist seo ach feictear dom-sa gur mó a théigheas an cineal sin léightheoireacht 'un dochair ná' un sochair dóibh.' Unsigned note dated 3 February 1932. File MISC 004, 'Léirmheasa ar Leabhra Béarla,' An Gúm Collection, The National Archives. [Translations throughout are the author's own.]
7. 'Ní dóigh liom go mbeadh an sgéal seo feiliúnach le é d'aistriú go Gaedhilg. Tá, *inter alia*, an iomarca tagartha – cuid dí ion-tuigthe agus cuid dí so-thuigthe – ann *aux filles de joie* agus dá ngairm.' Note from Tomás Ó hEighneacháin, 31 December 1931. *Ibid.*
8. 'Seo ceann de na leabhra Béarla is mó cliú dar foillsigheadh sa mbliain 1927. Tá giota ann, ámhthach faoi Chreideamh agus faoi lucht Creidimh nach dtaitneochadh le cuid mhaith léightheoirí Gaedhilge, agus 'na theannta sin tá go leor cur síos ar rudaí a sháruigheann an Sémhadh Aithne. B'fhearr an leabhar do chur faoi bhrághaid Shagairt le breith údarásaigh d'fháil maidir leis na cúrsaí mórálachta sul má socrúigtear é chur ar Liosta na Leabhar Ionaistrighthe.' Note from Tomás Ó hEighneacháin, January 11, 1932. *Ibid.*

9. '[A]n cor is lugha ar domhan do bhaint [as altán nó dhó] chun iad do chur i n-oireamhaint do mheon an deigh-Chríostaidhe.' Letter from Mícheál Ó Griobhtha to An Gúm, June 23, 1930. File A0092, 'The Fair God,' An Gúm Collection, The National Archives.
10. 'Cuir i gcás: Jesú Christ agus a leithéid, á spalpadh ag na Spáinigh. Tá tagairt, leis, don Mhaighdín Mhuire agus don Sacraimint Naomhtha i leathanach 433 den leabhar ná taithneochadh le daoineibh, agus níor mhór é a shéimhiú. [...] B'é ba bhaoghal liom ach dá n-aistrighthí na mionna agus an t-alt i leathanach 433 'n-a riocht cóir ná glacfaí an leabhar sna scoileanna.' Letter from Ó Griobhtha to An Gúm, June 30, 1930. Ibid.
11. Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881–1921: Ideology and Innovation* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1994), 22.
12. See Pádraic Colum, *Mac Rí na hÉireann*, trans. Niall Ó Domhnaill (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1935); Edmuny Leamy, *Piobaire Sídhle Ghleann Maoilínghra*, trans. Prionnsias Ó Brógáin (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1933) and *Sídhle-Scéalta*, trans. Brighid Ní Loingsigh (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1932); Standish O'Grady, *Teacht Chú Chulainn*, trans. Tomás Ó Gallchobhair (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1933).
13. B.G. MacCarthy, 'Thomas Crofton Croker, 1798–1854', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 32, no. 128 (December 1943): 543.
14. Ibid., 541, 543, 545.
15. Thomas Crofton Croker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (London: Murray, 1828), 77.
16. There are many different editions of this work, but a handwritten note on a letter from The Cathedral Book Store dated September 29, 1932 suggests that An Gúm ordered and translated from T. Wright's 1912 edition. File A121, 'Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland,' An Gúm Collection, The National Archives.
17. 'Thárla gur don aos óg atá na scéalta seo ghá n-aistriú mholfainn cóip de fhrómhadh an leabhair a chur faoi bhrághaid duine den chlér.' Note from Tomás Ó hEighneacháin, January 11, 1931. File A121.
18. Croker, *Fairy Legends*, 129.
19. 'Níl sa liosta sin ach na cinn nach mholfainn [sic] chor ar bith ach gan cainnt ortha sin tá go leor eile aca nach bhfuil ach Gall-Ghaedhealach agus b'fhearr im' thuairim-se leagan na ndaoine a bheith ar fáil in áit leagain na gran-gintry may it please your honor's honor. Níor mhisde go leor den chineal seo cainnte, den uisque baugh agus den phoitín a ghlanadh as.' Internal note from Tomás Ó hEighneacháin, January 11, 1931.

- File A121. In his 'gran-gintry' version, Croker sets himself up as an outsider to the stories: as MacCarthy notes, Croker's Anglo-Irish heritage meant that the culture of the people was 'obviously alien' to him, 'Thomas Crofton Croker,' 540.
20. It was common practice in An Gúm for two readers to judge a text's suitability for translation.
 21. 'Ba mhaith liom a rádh léi gan aon rud áiféiseach d'aistriú. Cuir i gcás peire bróg ar bhradán.' Note from Mícheál Ó Gríobhtha, November 23, 1932. File A121.
 22. Croker, *Fairy Legends*, 8.
 23. 'Is dóigh liom gur mar mhíniughadh ar ainm an chnuic a ceapadh an scéal, ach "Cnoc Sidhe Eamhna" an ainm cheart [sic].' Thomas Crofton Croker, *Síobbraí na mBeann agus na nGleann* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1939), 1.
 24. 'Is dóigh gur mar mhíniughadh ar ainm na carriage a ceapadh an scéal, ach 'Carraig Ó gConaing' an ainm cheart [sic].' Ibid., 111.
 25. Philip L. Marcus, *Standish O'Grady* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1970), 43.
 26. Standish O'Grady, *Finn and His Companions* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1921), 24.
 27. Ibid., 31. Interestingly, this phenomenon can be seen in Patricia Lynch's work as well. See Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn, 'Asal Fhear na Mónadh: Aistriúchán Mhaighréad Nic Mhaicín ar Shaothar Patricia Lynch', in *Laethanta Gréine agus Oícheanta Sí*, eds. Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn and Ríona Nic Congáil (Baile Átha Cliath: LeabhairCOMHAR, 2013), 69–94.
 28. Michael Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 160.
 29. O'Grady, *Fionn agus a Chuideachta*, 15.
 30. *The Coming of Cuculain: A Romance of the Heroic Age of Ireland* (London: Methuen & Co., 1894); *In the Gates of the North* (Kilkenny: Standish O'Grady, 1901); *The Triumph and Passing of Cuculain* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1920).
 31. Letter from Seosamh Mac Grianna to Seán MacLellan, October 30, 1934. File A298, 'The Triumph of Cuculain,' An Gúm Collection, The National Archives. Interestingly, Philip O'Leary notes that Mac Grianna admitted in 1936 that he hadn't actually read the 'original' story of *An Táin*. O'Leary also states that Mac Grianna was accused of creating a 'provincial propaganda tract' in his retelling of Brian Boru's story in his work *Na Lochlannaigh*: 'he focused his efforts on rehabilitating the reputation of the Uí Néill king Máelsechnaill ... what troubled him was the consistent disparagement of Máelsechnaill the Northerner in favour of

- Brian the Southerner'. Mac Grianna was not paid according to the rates for historical works for *Na Lochlannaigh*. It may also have been the image of the bold Cú Chulainn defending the province of Ulster that attracted him to *An Táin*. (O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State*, 278, 347).
32. Internal note from Domhnall Mac Grianna to Seán MacLellan, October 3, 1932. 'Tá an sampla seo déanta go maith agus sílim go n-éireochadh le N. Ó. D. [Niall Ó Domhnaill] croiceann maith a chur ar an aistriú. Ach tá seo ann gur mór an truagh bheith ag cur amugha ama agus airgid ag déanamh aistrighthe ar scéalta a bhfuil a mbunadhas ar dhóigh nó ar dhóigh eile sa Ghaedhilg cheana. Tá siad déanta go deas sa Bhéarla; ach tá cuid mhór den deiseacht ag baint le seo: gur scéalta Gaedhilge iad agus nach bhfuil an cineál sin coitcheantais sa Bhéarla.' File A235, 'Mac Rí na hÉireann,' An Gúm Collection, The National Archives.
 33. Eiléan Ní Chuilleánáin, 'Folklore and Writing for Children in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Padraic Colum, Patricia Lynch and Eilís Dillon', in *Folklore and Modern Irish Writing*, eds. Anne Markey and Anne O'Connor (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2014), 114.
 34. Note from P.S. Ó Tighearnaigh to Seán MacLellan, July 10, 1937. 'Is dócha go bhfuil ádhbhar an leabhair níos feileamhnaige do pháistí bun-scoile ná leabhar ar bith eile a chuir an Gúm amach.' File A235.
 35. Ní Chuilleánáin, 'Folklore and Writing for Children', 117.
 36. The emphasis in these texts is clearly on the great men that shaped the country's history, and few women (with the notable exception of Saint Bridget) can be seen in these texts. O'Leary has a fuller account of his historical textbooks in *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State*, 265–275. It is also worth noting that the representation of mythology as history continues to this day: see, for example, Bernard and Fatti Burke, *Historopedia* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2016).
 37. Philip O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State, 1922–1939* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004), 374.
 38. Máire Ní Chinnéide, *Scéalta ó Ghrimm* (Baile Átha Cliath: Conradh na Gaedhilge, 1923). The following stories are in this edition: 'Cailín na nGéanna,' 'Heansal is Greiteal' and 'Sneachtín Bán.'
 39. Proinsias Ó Súilleabháin, *Sídh-scéalta na mBráthar Grimm* (Baile Átha Cliath: Alec Tom agus a chuid: 1926). The following stories are included in Ó Súilleabháin's text: 'An prionnsa i n-a fhrog,' 'Seán Ádhmharach,' 'An ghé órdha' and 'An machaire agus na seacht ngabhairíní.'
 40. Seán Mac Giollarnáth, *Fí-Fá-Fum* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1931). 'Cóitín Luachra' and 'Ceoltóirí Bhremen' are included in this work.
 41. 'Níor mhaith liom an dara leagan a chur ar scéal ar bith atá aistrighthe cheana.' Internal note from Tomás Ó hEighneacháin, September 24, 1932.

- File A296, 'Kinder- und Hausmärchen,' An Gúm Collection, The National Archives.
42. This organisation was renamed The Irish Folklore Commission in 1935.
 43. '[E]agar iomlán de na Kindermärchen Grimm – eagar lom gan pictiúirí má's é is saoire é.' Letter from Seán MacLellan to Séamus Ó Duilearga, February 9, 1933. File A296.
 44. Letter from Ó Duilearga to MacLellan, February 10, 1933. Ibid.
 45. 'Is chuig muintir an Bhéaloidis ba cheart a leitheide seo de scéalta a sheoladh mar is chuige sin atá siad-san agus is chuige sin atá siad ag fáil airgid ó'n Rialtas. Anois thárla Coimisiún Bhéaloidis a bheith á chur ar bun le breathnú i ndiaidh an cineál sin oibre sílim nár cheart don Roinn seo bheith ag cur ladar isteach i ngnóthaí an Choimisiúin.' Note to Sean MacLellan from Tomás Ó hEighneacháin 12.01.35. File N563, 'Sgéalta,' An Gúm Collection, The National Archives.
 46. The material from the Schools' Collection (1937–1939) has been digitised at www.dúchas.ie.
 47. Pádraig Ó Moghráin, *An tÉan Órdha agus sídhe-sgéalta eile* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1938); *Na Trí Cleití agus Sídhe-sgéalta Eile* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1938); *Cochaillín Dearg* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1939); *Dealg-Róisín* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1940); *Cailín na Luatha* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1941); *An Solas Gorm* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1942); *An Cailín Críonna* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1943); *An Cailín Gan Lámba* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1943); *An Chónra Ghloine* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1943); *Cailleach na Coilleadh* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1943); *Seán Stuaðhma* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1947).
 48. '[N]íl rudaí gránna chomh flúirseach ionnta agus shíl mé.' Letter from Ó Moghráin, 18 August 1933. File A296.
 49. 'Chuir mé athrú beag ar dheireadh an sgéil mar bhí rudaí ann nach bhféileann do léightheoirí óga.' Letter from Ó Moghráin, October 19, 1933. Ibid.
 50. 'Tá faitchíos orainn nach bhfeilfeadh cúpla rudaí beaga sa scéal atá aistrighthe agat ach, cé gur leasg linn a dhéanamh, is dócha nách mór iad a atharú nó na píosaí fhagháilt ar lár ar fad.' Ibid. Letter from Ó Moghráin, October 31, 1933.
 51. 'Ba mhaith liom baramhail sagairt a fhágáil fá'n sgéal deiridh.' Letter from Ó Moghráin to An Gúm, October 22, 1935.
 52. 'Scéalta faoi'n Diabhal [cf Séadna] agus faoi Naomh Peadar atá ionta. Tá béaloideas na hÉireann lán de rudaí atá i bhfad níos 'láidre' ná iad. B'fhéidir nár mhisde iad a fhágáil ar lár i leabhra scoile ar chaoi ar bith'; 'ach ar fhaithchíos go mbeadh ceist ar bith ann faoi ar ball, b'fhéidir nár

- mhiste tuairim fháil ó shagart eicínt.’ Internal note, November 25, 1935. File A296.
53. ‘Léigh mé an sgéal seo agus’sé mo bharamhail go mbéadh cuid mhór daoine mí-shásta dó. Ní fhuil mé ag rádh go bhfuil mórán ar bith ann atá rascánta nó tréasamhail acht tá sé uilig claon beag neamh-urramasach do’n Mhaighdin Mhuire. I ndiaidh mé mo dhithcheille meabhruighthe a dhéanamh air dhéanfainn amach nach mbéadh sé ceart déanta a chur i gcló. Dála an sgéil – tá bunadhas an sgéil seo innste i nGaedhilg cheana féin – agus innste go fíor-mhaith. Gheobhfar é san Sgéalaidhe Ghaedhealach fán teideal “Seánadh na mná óige.”’ Letter dated December 12, 1935. Ibid.
 54. Grimm, *An Cailín Críonna*.
 55. Brothers Grimm, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm: The Complete First Edition*, trans. Jack Zipes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 274.
 56. Grimm, *An Solas Gorm*, 37.
 57. ‘[T]á baramhail agam i gcomhnaidhe nach mbéadh sé féileamhnach. Níl mórán ann go deimhin ach níor bh’fhéidir a athrú gan seafóid a dhéanamh de’n sgéal.’ Letter from Ó Moghraín, August 10, 1938. Ibid.
 58. Grimm, *Cailleach na Coilleadh*, 6–7.
 59. An attempt was made to translate another of Ballantyne’s *robinsonades*, *The Dog Crusoe*, in the early 1930s; the contract was annulled when it was decided that the translation had not been done to a high enough standard. See File A227, ‘The Dog Crusoe,’ An Gúm Collection, The National Archives. Conradh na Gaeilge published a translation of *Robinson Crusoe* itself in 1925, a text which is often adapted for children. It seems from the pedagogical glossary at the back of the book that this translation was aimed at adult learners of the language.
 60. Ó Cathain had previously stated that he would rather translate, ‘leabhar ag baint le saoghal na h-Éireann’, but this preference was ignored. Letter from Ó Cathain to ‘An Rúnaí’, May 19, 1931. File A0230, ‘Coral Island,’ An Gúm Collection, National Archives.
 61. R.M. Ballantyne, *An tOileán Corghruanach*, trans. Seán Ó Cathain (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1939), 229.
 62. R.M. Ballantyne, *The Coral Island* (London: The Thames Publishing, 1858), 21.
 63. Ballantyne, *An tOileán Corghruanach*, 32.
 64. Ibid., 24.
 65. ‘Leabhar ina bhfuil eachtraí go leór a bhéadh taitneamhach ag bhuachaillí, bíodh go bhfuil cuid aca atá doichreidte. Tá sé oireamhnach i gcóir tionntócháin, dom thuairimse. Tá fógra maith ann don London Missionary Society agus ag an Wesleyan Society, agus breis molta factha

- ann go minic ag an mBritisher.' Fiachra Éilgeach's note, 30 December 1931. Ibid.
66. 'B'íongantach liom 'sagart' a fheiceáil mar ainm ar an 'witchdoctor.' Is féidir gur priost a bhí 'san leagan Béarla, ach ní h-ionann a chineál agus an 'sagart' a bhfuil aithne i n-Éirinn – nó i nGaedhilg – air.' Anon., 'Leabharthaí Úra', *Irish News*, April 1, 1940.
 67. Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, 226.
 68. Wendy R. Katz, 'Rider Haggard and the Empire of the Imagination', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 23, no. 2 (1980): 115.
 69. Brian Ó Conchubhair, 'An Gúm, The Free State and the Politics of the Irish Language', in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922–1992*, eds. Linda King and Elaine Sisson (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 103.
 70. 'Ní n-haon deagh-chlú atá ar an leabhar *She*. Gan aon dá leath a dhéanamh de'n ghnó, sgéal págánach neamh-fhoghanta iseadh é. Is iomdha radharc gránna go gcuirtear síos air ann, agus is minic déantar tuairimí neamh-mhorálta a mholadh – go díreach nó go neamh-dhíreach.' *Timthire* (Meán Fómhair 1933).
 71. 'An bhfuil litridheacht ar bith eile ar domhan seachas litridheacht an Bhéarla le tarraingt aisti fá choinne aistriúcháin? Nó an bhfuil meas againn ar chultúr ar bith seachas cultúr na Sasanach? B'fhéidir gur sinn-ne féin cineadh an cheo sa mhéad seo'. *Irish Press*, August 1, 1941.
 72. 'Meallfaidh an insint seo an léightheoir, pé óg aosta é, má chuireann sé aon tsuim i bhfinnsgéaltaibh éadtroma. ... Moltar le léigheamh é'. *Irish Times*, July 11, 1941.
 73. '[T]á sé ar cheann des na leabhra is taitheamhaighe dár aistriughadh fós'. *The Standard*, June 17, 1941.
 74. H. Rider Haggard, *The People of the Mist* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1895), 25.
 75. MC035, 'Cineadh an Cheó' [Manuscript], An Gúm Collection, The National Archives.
 76. Haggard, *The People of the Mist*, 346.
 77. Letter from Seán MacLellan to Olive Cunningham, November 30, 1934. File A202, 'The Heart of the World,' An Gúm Collection, The National Archives.
 78. Ó Conchubhair, 'An Gúm, The Free State and the Politics of the Irish Language', 99.
 79. *Western People*, 19 March 1938; *The Standard*, June 17, 1941.
 80. N168, 'Oidheadh Clann Lir', An Gúm Collection, The National Archives.



This Is No Country for Young Girls? Irish Girlhood in the Revolutionary Period

Susan Cahill

Lucy McDiarmid begins her history of women's involvement in the 1916 Rising, *At Home in the Revolution*, with the following story: 'On Monday, 24 April 1916, just after twelve noon, Catherine Byrne, twenty years old, jumped into the General Post Office in Dublin'.¹ McDiarmid goes on to outline Byrne's initial attempt to enter the GPO through the front door, only to be turned back by Captain Michael Staines, prompting her to climb in a side window instead after which she insinuated herself in the action. McDiarmid also quotes Thomas MacDonagh in response to the arrival of Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh at Jacob's Biscuit factory: 'We haven't made any provision for girls here', highlighting the difficulties for young women, and indeed women in general, from participating in the action.² Although at the age of thirty-three, Nic

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Shiubhlaigh is not quite a 'girl', the use of this term, as well as Byrne's youth, and her sideways entry into the site of revolution are significant as I want to explore the relationships between the figure of the girl and the revolutionary moment of the early twentieth century in Ireland. Among McDiarmid's cast of women engaging with the Rising are a number of adolescent and young women: seventeen-year-old Sighle Humphreys; fifteen-year-old Mary McLoughlin³; twenty-four-year-old Máire Comerford, who failed to join the action but would go on to be an active republican⁴; and James Connolly's daughters Nora, twenty-four, and Ina, nineteen. Some of the young women actively adopted a more youthful appearance in order to distract from their revolutionary behaviour. According to McDiarmid, twenty-three-year-old Mairéad Ní Cheallaigh 'disguised herself as a girl: "I took off my nurse's apron and let down my hair in two plaits which must have made me look very young"'.⁵ Fifteen-year-old Cathleen Ryan also noted that she 'generally wore my hair in two long plaits'.⁶ Catherine Byrne hides dispatches in her hair dressed with a 'pink ribbon' and 'beret' while McDiarmid also notes the benefits of feminine clothing, 'with its hems and folds and textured fabrics' for the concealment of revolutionary objects such as guns and messages.⁷

This essay considers this idea of revolutionary girlhood in the context of the relatively new category of girlhood, which, as Sally Mitchell in her formative work on late nineteenth-century girlhood, *The New Girl*, notes, emerged from the 1880s as a set of ideas rather than necessarily descriptive of age. Girlhood, as a descriptor of new modes of being for the young woman, including new possibilities in terms of education and career, became associated with ideas of modernity, transition, transformation and a certain degree of rebellion. As Mitchell observes, 'The ascription of immaturity and transition gives [the girl] permission to behave in ways that might not be appropriate for a woman'.⁸ Furthermore, Mitchell notes an awareness among these new generations of girls that their assumptions were at odds with that of their parents: 'girls were consciously aware of their own culture and recognised its discord with adult expectations'.⁹ Given this association between girlhood and ideas of change and rebellion, in what ways are these connotations drawn on in the ways nationalists conceived of women's involvement in the Rising? Indeed, the 'invention' of girlhood and the 'invention' of the Irish nation encompassed by the Irish Literary Revival, cultural nationalism and the drive towards independence occupy the same time period,

yet connections between the ‘new girl’ and work of nation have not yet been explored.

This essay, then, considers the intersections between nationalist politics and discourses of female adolescence through an exploration of the periodical *Bean na hÉireann* (1908–1911), a nationalist newspaper and ‘the first women’s paper ever to be produced in Ireland’.¹⁰ The essay looks at the ways in which ideas of youth, futurity and independence are engaged with in the articulations of feminist nationalisms of the time, especially focusing on the writings of Countess Markievicz and Sydney Gifford (later Czira), both of whom contributed regularly to *Bean na hÉireann*. Markievicz deliberately identified and appealed to ‘rising young women’ in her writing. Gifford both occupied the space of the revolutionary girl—she herself was nineteen years old when she helped co-found the periodical—and imagined an Irish nationalist new girl, a ‘Gaelic girl’, as she terms her, in her journalism. These categories of the rising young woman and the Gaelic girl, which this essay will delineate, highlight the ways in which nationalist discourse drew on the potential of the figure of the girl and argued for her place within the nation. The predominance of spatial imagery in the ways in which *Bean na hÉireann* configured childhood and youth and in Markievicz’s appeal to rising young women highlights an awareness that youth and girlhood need to actively claim space in the imagined nation, also seen in the necessity for Catherine Byrne to jump through a side window into the GPO. Space needs to be constructed for and claimed by the girl. Furthermore, Gifford’s journalism shows the ways in which configurations of nationalist girlhood exceed and move beyond the borders of the very nation they are harnessed to represent, drawing on transnational and modern girlhood energies in opposition to the “‘waxworks” museum’ she describes her childhood as being.¹¹

REVOLUTIONARY GIRLHOOD

As we know, the turn of the twentieth century encompasses the intense creative moment of the Irish Literary Revival, the cultural focus of nationalism in terms of structuring and establishing a distinct Irish identity through organisations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League, and the political struggle towards independence from Britain. Children’s literature was a significant aspect of global literary culture in this period and often a prime location for the inculcation

and dissemination of national identities; children represented the future imperial or nationalist leaders (Brantlinger 1985; Kutzer 2000). Ireland's articulation as a new and independent nation often used childhood and youth as effective metaphors, yet this national child was invariably a male one. Recent scholarship on Irish children's literature of the period has identified the profusion of nationalist and propagandist literature aimed at children and the ways in which Irish mythology was mobilised to inspire a sense of national heritage and identity (Hay 2005; Flanagan 2005; West 1994). However, this scholarship focuses almost exclusively on the reading practices and literary culture of boys. Literature for girls and female writers of children's literature are rarely, if ever, mentioned in the few surveys of Irish children's literature that exist.

Significantly, as scholars such as Sally Mitchell point out, the last decades of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century mark the appearance of a distinctive category of girlhood itself and the creation of a separate culture of girlhood. Girlhood for Mitchell, and the scholars that follow her, describes a space of transition and sanctioned transgression between the more manageable spaces of childhood and married womanhood. Accompanying this newly emerging category was the development of a separate culture of girlhood, which primarily manifested itself through print—novels, periodicals and texts like advice books, but also spatially—through schools, clubs and universities, and through material culture—such as clothing and bicycles (see Mitchell, 3). Publications abounded for the girl in Britain—from periodicals such as *The Girl's Own Paper*, *Girl's Realm* and *Girls' Home* to fiction in genres from the school story to the adventure story, which all constructed, reflected and produced the girl of their titles. Kristine Moruzi, in her detailed overview of girls' periodicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *Constructing Girlhood through the Periodical Press*, stresses the important role of the periodical in the development of children's literature and girls' culture and notes that, for most children, the periodical was their primary engagement with fiction due to its affordability. Periodicals aimed at girls increased in production from the 1860s due to their recognised commercial potential and were one of the most important factors in the articulation and construction of girlhood and girls' cultures in the period. However, although an Irish (nationalist) alternative to the popular British *The Boy's Own Paper* was published from 1914 entitled *Our Boys*, a girls' equivalent did not appear until 1930. Irish girls did not have a publication aimed at or catering to

their readers so I am particularly interested in the ways young women are addressed or represented in *Bean na hÉireann*, ‘the first women’s paper ever to be produced in Ireland’.¹²

Girlhood is a slippery category, at once self-explanatory and difficult to define. What constitutes a girl? When does a girl become a woman? Where is the dividing line between girl and child? Why does MacDonagh use the term girl in response to thirty-three-year-old Nic Shiubhlaigh? The term ‘girl’ was often used to describe unmarried women as Kristine Moruzi notes, while nicely outlining the contradictions and slipperiness of the term:

Developmentally, girlhood could be considered to end when a girl began menstruating. The age of sexual consent for girls in Victorian England was raised from 13 to 16 only after W.T. Stead’s series of controversial newspaper articles on child prostitution were published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885. Legally, a girl became an adult at the age of 21, at which point she could dispose of her own property, yet she lost those rights when she married. Widows and spinsters who were householders were given municipal suffrage in 1869 and were able to vote for, and become members of, school boards in 1870. Yet it was not until 1918 that women over the age of 30 were given parliamentary franchise, with universal franchise granted only in 1928. In practical terms, a girl in Victorian England often remained a “girl” until she married. “Girl” was a useful signifier of marital status since it suggested a female who was not yet contained within the domestic space of marriage and maternity.¹³

Girlhood, it seems, is not necessarily descriptive of age, but, as Mitchell indicates, was created by a set of cultural, social and economic factors. As noted above, girlhood becomes a distinctive category from about the 1880s describing a period of time between the sheltered space of childhood and adulthood (the latter of which was usually marked by marriage):

Compulsory schooling; changes in child-labor laws and economic circumstances; the new female occupations of nursing, school-teaching, and clerical work; the diminishing proportion of working-class girls employed in domestic service relative to other occupations; and the opportunity of extended academic or professional education for some among the middle classes meant that a great many more girls had some period

of transition between 'child at home' and the assumption of wholly adult responsibilities.¹⁴

This transitional status of girlhood then became connected to a sense of possibility, associated with transgression, and transformation.

As Sarah Bilston points out in her study of female adolescence in popular fiction, the Victorian child was to be 'seen and not heard', the married woman was the 'angel in the house', but the space opened out by girlhood permitted rebellion against the structures that held women in place in Victorian society.¹⁵ She argues that narratives focusing on the girl, even by conservative writers, often 'helped lay the groundworks for *fin de siècle* feminist challenges to traditional Victorian gender norms' due to this permitted rebelliousness that became linked to conceptions of girlhood.¹⁶ As Mitchell notes, the 'new girl' was conscious of a difference in the possibilities of her life in comparison with her mother while also recognising the limitations that 'womanhood' possessed.¹⁷ Thus, the figure of the girl carries with her a sense of potential, a gesture towards alternative futures, and a critique of the gender roles sanctioned by her society and culture. Bilston notes an increase in associations between girlhood and rebellion from the 1890s, predicated on expanding access to education for young women and the observation of links between the figure of the New Woman and the girl: 'long standing terms of transitional girlhood were implicitly shaping the cultural sense of the rebellious woman. Descriptions of the New Woman, that arch-rebel, continually invoke just such a rhetoric of awakening youth'.¹⁸ Literature that represented the New Woman drew on the already established figure of the transitional girl, using her to identify 'awakenings to disaffected consciousness' and, Bilston continues, '[t]he girl remained an important tool for probing cultural norms...her restlessness and rebellion could be used to articulate desires for self-determination and independence'.¹⁹ Thus, as the nineteenth century draws to an end, the figure of the girl carries with her qualities that link her to Ireland's movement towards national independence.

In Ireland, this sense of new possibilities associated with the younger generation of women is evident in a letter written by Nell Humphreys, mother of seventeen-year-old Sighle Humphreys, quoted by McDiarmuid: 'I used to feel ashamed of Sigle [sic] as being unwomanly, when Anna told me that at times it was difficult to prevent her from taking a shot herself...But it is only the spirit of the age'.²⁰ The behaviour

of this rebellious girl is only understandable in the new 'spirit of the age'. R.F. Foster in *Vivid Faces* also identifies a sense of change and an awareness of generational difference in the revolutionary activists: 'The men and women who made the Irish revolution knew that they were different from their parents'.²¹ They were 'a self-conscious group of people, shaped by the circumstances of their time... a generation who conceived of themselves as bent on transformation'.²² As the figure of the rebellious girl emerges at the same time as the work of nation encompassed by the Irish Literary Revival, cultural nationalism and the drive towards political independence, it is all the more interesting to note her connections to transformation and potential. Given Moruzi's highlighting of the importance of the periodical in the articulation and construction of girlhood in the period, I am particularly interested here in the interconnections between discourses of nationalism, feminism and youth in the periodicals of the time, particularly in *Bean na hÉireann*, which was, as noted above, co-founded and featured journalism by young women.

Bean na hÉireann (Women of Ireland) was a monthly publication that ran from November 1908 to February 1911, costing one penny. The organ of the nationalist women's organisation, Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland), the newspaper was edited by Helena Molony, the organisation's co-founder and secretary. Molony would also become an Abbey actress, co-founder of Na Fianna Éireann with Constance Markievicz, general secretary of the Irish Women Workers' Union and secretary of the Irish Citizen Army's women's group. She was imprisoned for her activities during the 1916 Rising and continued to support workers' rights and the trade union movement throughout her life, becoming president of the Irish Trades Union Council in 1937.²³ From its inception, Inghinidhe na hÉireann recognised the significance of children and youth; indeed, the society had been founded around the organisation of a 'Patriotic Children's Treat' in opposition to a Children's Treat in Phoenix Park to mark the visit in April 1900 of Queen Victoria to Ireland.²⁴ The first object of the society was 'To encourage the study of Gaelic, of Irish literature, history, music, and art, *especially among the young*, by the organising and teaching of classes for the above subjects'.²⁵

The newspaper *Bean na hÉireann* also dedicated space to a youthful audience in the form of a children's column called 'An Grianán' which began in April 1909 and ran until March 1910. In its opening address, its author Dectora (pseudonym of Madeleine ffrench-Mullen) wrote:

To-day at last the Editor has allowed us a small space all to ourselves. It is a very small space, indeed, but is going to grow bigger and bigger as the months go on, and we are going to make it as interesting and entertaining as ever we can with competitions and puzzles, and all kinds of nice things.²⁶

The spatial imagery is interesting here, especially when connected to the adolescent girls' sideways entry into the revolutionary space in 1916. The column recognises the significance of taking up space, a space that can be then increased. The spatial imagery is also alluded to in the title of the column: 'An Grianán' means a solarium or sunroom, and was typically perceived as a women's (and, by implication, a children's) space. In Standish O'Grady's *The Coming of Cuchulain*, Setanta's mother, Dectera, responds to his desire to go to Emain Macha by separating him from 'the society of men and kept him by herself in the women's quarter, which was called grianan'.²⁷ The book stresses the necessity for Setanta to leave this women's space in order to leave behind his childhood and enter manhood: "his childhood is over, O Dectera" answered one of her women, "and that thou are living in the past and in dreams. For who can hold back Time in his career?"²⁸ Madeline ffrench-Mullen's assumption of the role and space of Cuchulain's mother, Dectora, in this publication offers an interesting claiming of this position and indeed *Beanna hÉireann* often stressed the important role that mothers, and Irish women in general, had in the inculcation of nationalist politics in the children:

do we seriously consider what a force the children are in the country or are they thought about at all... there is the undeniable fact that women have the children in their own hands – to mould their minds as they will, and there is nothing to prevent her exercising this right here and now. We do not address ourselves to Nationalist mothers in particular, or indeed to mothers at all, but to all our readers who are Irish women.²⁹

'An Grianán' significantly fills this children's space with interaction—'competitions and puzzles'. The column also included a serialised story by ffrench-Mullen under the pseudonym M. O'Callaghan, generally in a quite didactic mode but not explicitly nationalistic—for instance, the story 'Campbella: or the Tale of a Proud Princess' describes a beggar-hating and haughty princess, who when forced to live as a beggar

becomes a generous and inclusive ruler, ‘because she had known what it was to be cold and hungry and hunted from door to door, and she now had a fellow feeling for a fellow sufferer’.³⁰ Marnie Hay, in her insightful analysis of nationalist children’s columns including ‘An Grianán’, comments that ‘Concern for those less fortunate than oneself was a theme that ran through the pages of *Bean na hÉireann*, reflecting the Inghinidhe’s (and Molony’s) combined national and social conscience’.³¹ Identifying seven female and three male prize winners, Hay comments that the column’s audience ‘were most likely the children or younger siblings of the paper’s adult readers’ and the column specifically addresses itself to younger children, disqualifying one winner because she was over the age of sixteen.³² The interactivity of the competitions, which generally called for essays on Irish subjects or posed Irish-language puzzles, also specifically invites child readers into the space of the periodical as well as encouraging and supporting their writing.

While ‘An Grianán’ calls children into this nationalist feminist space, and specifically asks Irish women to teach young children, what place is offered for the girls who fall between child and woman, for the girl over the age of sixteen who was disqualified from ‘An Grianán’s’ competition? I want to move away now from a consideration of material aimed at children in the periodical, which Hay covers in more detail in her essay, and consider whether the publication draws on the potential of the figure of the adolescent girl. Although *Bean na hÉireann* does not address the girl in as explicit a way as it does the mother, adult woman or child, the periodical does draw on girlhood and the figure of the girl in some interesting ways. Karen Margaret Steele, in her study of women and periodical culture during the Revival, describes the politics and focus of *Bean na hÉireann* as offering important access to feminist and labour issues, while also pointing to an awareness of a newer demographic—working and single girls:

If it lacked an explicit commitment to the suffragist cause, *Bean na hÉireann* nonetheless expressed advanced feminist and labor views for its time. Several years before the Irish Women’s Franchise League had its own newspaper, *Bean na hÉireann* provided news of the women’s movement around the world. Mindful of the growing role of working women in Irish society, it also circulated tips and helpful suggestions for blue-collar, professional, and “independent” women, as well as for single girls.³³

An article about the founding of Inghinidhe na hÉireann stresses that the founding members were all ‘young girls...(with one exception) all working girls’.³⁴ As Margaret Ward points out, this meant ‘not that they were working class, but that they were independent women earning their own living without the financial support of their families’.³⁵ In August 1909, Molony explicitly addresses Irish girls, asking them to work, to get involved in the instruction of children in Irish history and culture. She congratulates the Inghinidhe for their work and ‘wish all the girls in Ireland started similar work’.³⁶ Thus, the newspaper offers girls significant roles in the development of the nation, to teach the future citizens of Ireland, but also, as we shall see, to actively create and take up space in this imagined nation.

RISING YOUNG WOMEN

In the August 1909 editorial, Molony also recommends reading material for girls.³⁷ She notes Inghinidhe na hÉireann’s publication of Markievicz’s lecture ‘Women, Ideals and the Nation’, which is advertised in subsequent issues, priced at one penny. ‘We would like to see it in the hands of every Irish girl’ writes Molony, and indeed Markievicz’s speech, which was excerpted in *Bean na hÉireann* in November 1909, spoke directly to ‘the rising young women of Ireland’ and had been delivered to such women at the Students’ National Literary Society, Dublin on the 28 March.³⁸ Markievicz, in her speech, goes on to identify a new generation:

We older people look to you with great hopes and a great confidence that in your gradual emancipation you are bringing fresh ideas, fresh energies and above all a great genius for sacrifice into the life of the nation.³⁹

This emphasis on freshness, youth and a growing freedom associated with them is particularly important as Markievicz draws on the discourse of girlhood for explicitly nationalist aims, linking the revolution of girlhood with the revolution of Ireland:

There are great possibilities in the hands and the hearts of the young women of Ireland – great possibilities and great responsibilities... as a woman and as an Irishman – you will have to face the question of how

your life has been spent, and how have you served your sex and your nation?⁴⁰

She continues throughout the speech to refer specifically to girls, to use generational language and to highlight the potentialities of girlhood harnessed for the possibilities of nationalism:

Ireland wants her girls to help her to build up her national life. Their fresh, clean views on life, their young energies, have been too long hidden away and kept separate in their different homes. Bring them out and organise them, and lo! you will find a great new army ready to help the national cause...For each one of you there is a niche waiting – your place in the nation. Try and find it.⁴¹

Furthermore, Markievicz offers these girls a *place* in the nation, encouraging them to actively seek and establish this space as their own, and asking them to form communities in order to take up this space. As well as calling for militant action, Markievicz also offered less extreme means of engaging in nationalist politics, encouraging the purchase of Irish goods as a revolutionary act, in keeping with *Bean na hÉireann*'s frequent articles on the same. Markievicz writes:

If the women of Ireland would organise the movement for buying Irish goods more, they might do a great deal to help their country. If they would make it the fashion to dress in Irish clothes, feed on Irish food – in this as in everything, LIVE REALLY IRISH LIVES, they would be doing something great, and don't let our clever Irish colleens rest content with doing this individually, but let them go out and speak publicly about it, form leagues, of which "No English Goods" is the war cry.⁴²

It is tempting to think that the girls who insisted on entering the revolutionary space of the Rising through side windows or front doors were inspired by such demands to find their niche.⁴³ What is significant about this speech is that adolescent girls and young women were being directly addressed, treated as important and powerful potential citizens and called to action in a variety of ways from their consumer power through the purchase of Irish goods and clothing to the taking up of arms for the nation. This famous and often quoted polemic by Markievicz had as its primary audience the very group of people are often invisible in historical accounts of the period—girls. In many ways, Markievicz's speech and the

discourse of age in *Bean na hÉireann* establish children as the vessels to be filled with Irish politics, language and culture; mothers as the educators; and young women as the revolutionary potential, a potential that was indeed enacted by several ‘girls’ during the 1916 Rising. Thus, *Bean na hÉireann* contributed to the making of space and place for revolutionary constructions of girlhood.

GAELIC GIRL

Bean na hÉireann also had a revolutionary girl on its staff and who, at the age of nineteen, had been one of its co-founders in 1908. Sydney Gifford (later Czira)⁴⁴ was the youngest member of the upper-middle-class Gifford family; of twelve children, the six sisters all revolted against the unionist background of their family (while the six brothers conformed to the family’s unionist politics). All of the sisters were to varying degrees actively involved in nationalist politics; Katie was a member of Sinn Féin and Cumann na mBan; Nellie was involved with the Irish Women’s Franchise League, was a founding member of the Irish Citizen Army and took part in the 1913 lockout and the 1916 Rising (the only one of the sisters to actively participate); Ada emigrated to New York and worked as a professional artist and, as Anne Clare puts it, ‘had the distinction of being the first self-appointed woman spy engaged in working for the Irish-Ireland movement’⁴⁵; Muriel was a member of the Irish Women’s Franchise League and Inghinidhe na hÉireann and married Thomas MacDonagh in 1912; and Grace was also a member of Inghinidhe na hÉireann and Sinn Féin, as well as a political cartoonist and artist and contributor to the suffragette periodical the *Irish Citizen*, she would also marry Joseph Plunkett in his cell the night before his execution.⁴⁶ Like her sisters, Sydney encountered nationalist politics at Alexandra College where she was an exact contemporary of writer and republican Dorothy Macardle. As Nadia Claire Smith writes, quoting Gifford:

one of the few nationalist teachers at Alexandra saved her ‘from being moulded into a wax-work figure for the waxworks’ museum’ by giving her a copy of a nationalist weekly paper. Soon the sixteen-year-old Sidney was writing for Sinn Féin, and gained entry into the same literary and political circles that Macardle later joined.⁴⁷

As well as joining Inghinidhe na hÉireann and being elected to the executive of Sinn Féin, Gifford co-founded *Bean na hÉireann*, regularly

contributing articles under the pseudonym 'John Brennan' (sometimes also publishing as 'Sorcha Ní Hanlon'). Away in New York during the Rising, she founded the American branch of Cumann na mBan and joined the Women's Prisoners' Defence League upon her return to Ireland in 1922.⁴⁸ Once back in Ireland, she established herself in a career as a journalist and broadcaster. But it is her early work as a journalist for *Bean na hÉireann* that this chapter will focus on.

In April 1910, 'John Brennan' published 'a paper read to Inghinidhe na hÉireann' entitled 'Frivolity'. Gifford would have been aged twenty when writing this article, turning twenty-one that August. The article is a fascinating intervention into the aesthetics and behavioural expectations of the nationalist movement, particularly as they apply to 'Gaelic girls' (also referred to in the article as 'Irish-Ireland girls'). She begins by lamenting the 'dullness and stodginess which seems to have settled down on all things Gaelic', manifesting itself primarily in style:

The Gaelic girls believe that they cannot be patriotic Irish-women unless they dress themselves hideously and have their clothes cut in fashions long since gone out of vogue in the countries where they originated. They believe that so long as these fashions are no longer the rage throughout the rest of Europe we are justified in using them here in the sure knowledge that they must be Irish, because they are not being worn in England.⁴⁹

Irish-Ireland girls are 'dowdy and grim' and 'dressed very nearly as badly as the English suffragette'.⁵⁰ In contrast, Gifford advocates that 'the first duty of the Gaelic girl is to try and look frivolous and harmless' if the nationalist cause is going to attract the 'Seonini' or West Britons who are 'all just frivolous people with no harm in them...The real reason why so many of our people are Seonini is that the English institutions in the country afford them better amusement'.⁵¹ Gifford connects frivolity specifically with youth, 'the right to be frivolous which should be conceded to all young people',⁵² and draws on the language of generations, marking a difference in the attitudes of young people towards nationalist politics:

The present generation was born into this world weary with the sufferings of its ancestors. The desire for an Irish nation, which is the only thing which can make us entirely gay and happy again, is as strong in us to-day as it was in our ancestors. This is because we are a practical people, and realise that a nation cannot laugh who has lost its head. Ireland is going to

become a nation by one means alone – a laugh in which the whole country can join.⁵³

Therefore, writes Gifford, ‘our Gaelic girl must gabble just as enthusiastically about *ceilidhs* and *Feises* and the delightful Gaelic boys *she knows*, and prove to the astounded Seonini that the Gaels are even more frivolous than she is herself’.⁵⁴ Thus, according to Gifford, the Irish nationalist movement must engage in fun, amusement and attractive clothing in order to attract a broader audience, namely Irish people who have ‘never read certain books and then stopped to think’.⁵⁵

Running throughout this article is the development of that argument, appealing to attractive clothing, dancing, music and laughing as the desired modes of her new nationalism.⁵⁶ Gifford also refutes what she calls ‘two great cults of the Irish-Ireland movement ... [the] “sturdy Gael” and “shy cailín.”’ This shy girl, Gifford writes, ‘is an out-and-out imposter. I doubt if she ever existed, but if she did I am glad to say she has long since lost any shyness she ever possessed’ blaming the ‘Irish literary people’ for her existence.⁵⁷ Gifford’s ideal nationalist girl dresses well, dances with joy to modern music, speaks with enthusiasm about Irish dance, is not above flirtation and is, most of all, not shy. The Gaelic girl instead appealed to by the article has much in common with new developments in female youth culture in Britain and the USA, namely the figure of ‘Modern Girl’. As the ‘Modern Girl Around the World Research Group’ note: ‘The Modern Girl emerged quite literally around the world in the first half of the twentieth century. In cities from Beijing to Bombay, Tokyo to Berlin, Johannesburg to New York, the Modern Girl made her sometimes flashy, always fashionable appearance’.⁵⁸ As Moruzi writes, the girl was:

too fast, too modern, too independent, too casual, and too fashionable. She failed to respect the authority of her parents, and she neglected her family and community responsibilities. She was, altogether, less virtuous than girls of the past. In contrast, her advocates defended her as being stronger, healthier, and better educated.⁵⁹

Mitchell notes of the new term ‘flapper’ to describe the twentieth-century incarnation of girlhood: ‘In the immediate prewar years, “flapper” identified a new stage of life. It described girls who were

interested in looks and fashions, boy-conscious, flirtatious, teasing – but cute, rather than fast’, a perfect description of the persona adopted by Gifford in the article as well as the type of Gaelic girl she would like to see develop.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, it is the shy *cailín* rather than the Gaelic girl that takes hold in the imagination of Free State Ireland.⁶¹ The nation that establishes itself after the revolutionary period only has space for the pure maiden or the married mother (enshrined in the domestic sphere in the 1937 Constitution). As Maria Luddy points out, ‘from the foundation of the Free State women’s political, economic and social rights were gradually eroded’ through legislation such as the marriage bar, the censorship of information concerning contraception and the relegation of women to the domestic sphere as inscribed in the 1937 Constitution which undermined the language of equality used in both the 1916 Proclamation and the 1922 Constitution.⁶² Girls who deviated from the normative roles ascribed to them were removed from the space of the nation, hidden away in institutions such as Magdalen Laundries or Mother and Baby homes.⁶³ Gifford’s Gaelic girl and Markievicz’s ‘rising young women’ offer revolutionary potential at the beginning of the twentieth century which, however, dissipates as we move through the century.⁶⁴

Towards the end of the article, Gifford makes intriguing references to new popular music and dance forms as part of her argument for frivolity and the Gaelic girl:

The Harp of Granuale no longer plays its mournful music. The music we hear in our dreams and visions sounds suspiciously like rag-time. It is to whatever music she plays that we must dance, and though she does not ask you to dance a cake-walk, she begs you not to steel your feet and walk through life looking grim and sour.⁶⁵

Here, ragtime has replaced mournful Irish music and while the cake-walk seems a step too far (presumably due to a racist assumption about its connections to African American culture), these appeals to music and dance that are precursors to the jazz⁶⁶ and Charleston that would be associated with the flapper figure, offer linkages between girlhood, nationalism and music that are decidedly modern. Part of ragtime’s appeal lay in its associations with freedom and the new, as Peter Bailey

writes, ‘American ragtime demonstrated the appeal of its great expressive freedoms, somatically, sexually and colloquially’.⁶⁷ Gifford draws on this energy and these associations in her brief reference. For Gifford, new popular music, that would become associated with young women, becomes the soundtrack to a nationalist revolution. In fact, these associations between ragtime and young women were almost certainly underway. As Bailey notes:

The five *Pastime Rags* (1913–1920) of Artie Matthews, for example, all feature an image of a young white woman in a long white dress playing a grand piano. Here, the combination of title and cover art sends a clear message: ragtime has become a pleasant diversion – a “pastime” – for young ladies.⁶⁸

In her memoir, Gifford associates her youthful exposure to such music with the energy of an emerging adolescent culture: ‘one day, we heard the strange, new exciting rhythm called syncopation. In those songs, though we didn’t know it at the time, were sounded the first notes of that frenzy that went on in a rising crescendo, until it reached the rock’n roll and regge [sic] of today’.⁶⁹

Significantly then, Gifford links nationalism, youth culture and femininity in ways that harness the energies of the ‘Modern Girl’ for the production of the nation. Not only does Gifford insist upon a space for the girl and for frivolity (almost always associated with young women) in nationalism and in the nation, but she predicates the achievement of nationhood on this very figure, while also presenting a configuration of girlhood that exceeds and moves beyond the borders of through her associations with ragtime. The Gaelic girl is at once intrinsic to nationalism but is also part of a global phenomenon extending beyond the borders of the nation she is harnessed to produce. In identifying the set of ideas and imagery that make up the ‘global phenomenon’ of the ‘Modern Girl’—the girl as particularly associated with modernity, futurity and the new—Weinbaum et al. describe her as ‘denot[ing] young women with the wherewithal and desire to define themselves in excess of conventional female roles and as transgressive of national, imperial, and racial boundaries’.⁷⁰ The transgressive and transnational potential of the girl unfortunately positions her as at odds with the insular culture of the Free State, from which she is erased. Weinbaum et al. particularly note the Modern Girl’s complicated relationship to nationalisms in which

she often becomes the focus of discourses and structures of control, ‘a body in need of policing by nation-states, social reformers, and missionaries as well as national bourgeoisies’.⁷¹ In an Irish context, this manifests through a politics of institutionalisation through establishments such as the Magdalen laundries and a cultural investment in the shy cailín trope that Gifford so vehemently rejects. Gifford’s Gaelic girl offers an intriguing feminist potential, a celebration of girlish energies and a nation that begins with a transgressive laugh and open to transnational influence.

Interestingly, Gifford’s appeal to frivolity in her construction of the Gaelic girl extends to *Bean na hÉireann* itself, with its articles on fashion notes and beauty hints sharing the same space as labour notes and articles about the women’s movement. In the 1910 article about the founding of Inghinidhe na hÉireann by ‘some young girls in Dublin’, the author notes that as well as discussing the reasons for setting up the organisation, the girls ‘discussed the best way for dressing the hair... and the latest fashions, black and karkhi, because it was the year of the Boer war’ again drawing on the discourse and concerns associated with the flapper or modern girl.⁷² *Bean na hÉireann* then worked to both attract and produce the ‘rising young women’ or the Gaelic girl, the girl who stood for modernity, who represented a new generational movement tied to the possibility of an independent nation and who would take up arms for that new nation and look good wearing Irish-made clothes while doing so. Indeed, as is apparent in McDiarmid’s account of women during the Rising, this is exactly what they did, often using feminine or girlish signifiers (such as the plaits mentioned in the introduction) for revolutionary purposes, a necessary disguise rather than an explicit nod to the flapper, yet significant in its placing of girls in the revolutionary moment. Important here is the insistence on creating space for girls and young women in nationalism and the creation of the new nation, claiming that space if necessary by climbing in a window or taking up space by being excessively frivolous and transgressive. As Gifford concludes her article, ‘you will find that the frivolous girl is as good a striker as any when it comes to fighting for the nation’.⁷³

NOTES

1. Lucy McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution: What Women Said and Did in 1916* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 3.
2. McDiarmid, 23.

3. McLoughlin climbed out of a window in order to join the fighting—her mother had locked her in a room to prevent her participation, and whose youth was observed by older rebels: as McDiarmid notes: ‘Julia Grenan (a member of Cuman na mBan and the Citizen Army) calls her “a little girl”’. McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution*.
4. As McDiarmid notes, ‘All three women (Comerford, Humphreys, McLoughlin), restrained in various ways in 1916, would become active in the War of Independence and in the Civil War. Comerford and Humphreys were politically engaged republicans for the rest of their lives’ McDiarmid.
5. McDiarmid, 29.
6. McDiarmid, 30. In her memoir, Sydney Gifford Czira notes that hair and clothing were particular markers of age in women in this period: ‘it was easy enough to tell the age of a woman at a glance by the feminine chronology of the day. If she was between the ages of fourteen and eighteen she wore her long hair tied behind with a ribbon into what was called a “horse’s tail”. As soon as she reached her eighteenth year she was deemed a woman and God help the girl who didn’t put up her hair and let her skirts down then’ Sydney Gifford Czira, *The Years Flew By: The Recollections of Madame Sydney Czira* (Dublin: Gifford & Craven, 1974), 3. Many of the revolutionary young women deliberately adopted the hairstyle signifying girlhood in order to escape suspicion, and this tying together of the girl and revolutionary behaviour is significant.
7. McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution*, 32.
8. Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England, 1880–1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 25.
9. Mitchell, 3.
10. Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 67.
11. Gifford Czira, *The Years Flew By: The Recollections of Madame Sydney Czira*, 6.
12. Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, 67.
13. Kristine Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood Through the Periodical Press, 1850–1915*, Ashgate Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present (Routledge, 2016), 9.
14. Mitchell, *The New Girl*, 3.
15. Sarah Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women’s Popular Fiction, 1850–1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 2004), 7.
16. Bilston, 7.
17. Mitchell, *The New Girl*, 3.
18. Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women’s Popular Fiction, 1850–1900*, 174.

19. Bilston, 175. For a discussion of the Irish manifestation of the New Woman figure, see Tina O'Toole, *The Irish New Woman* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
20. McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution*, 21–22.
21. R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2015), 1.
22. Foster, 330.
23. Frances Clarke and Lawrence William White, 'Molony, Helena', in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, eds. James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a5874>.
24. Marnie Hay, 'What Did Advanced Nationalists Tell Irish Children in the Early Twentieth Century?' in *What Do We Tell the Children? Critical Essays on Children's Literature*, eds. Ciara Ní Bhroin and Patricia Kennon (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 148–162.
25. Maria Luddy, ed., 'Inghinidhe Na hÉireann, United Irishman, 13 October 1900', in *Women in Ireland 1800–1918: A Documentary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), 300–301. My italics.
26. Dectora, 'An Grianán', *Bean Na hÉireann*, April 1909.
27. Standish O'Grady, *The Coming of Cuculain: A Romance of the Heroic Age of Ireland* (Methuen & Company, 1894), 31.
28. O'Grady, 35.
29. Helena Molony, 'Editorial Notes', *Bean Na hÉireann*, June 1909.
30. M. O'Callaghan, 'Campbella: Or the Tale of a Proud Princess', *Bean Na hÉireann*, April 1910, 12.
31. Hay, 'What Did Advanced Nationalists Tell Irish Children in the Early Twentieth Century?' 157.
32. Hay, 156, 157.
33. Karen Margaret Steele, *Women, Press, and Politics During the Irish Revival* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 111.
34. Maire, 'Inghinidhe Na hÉireann: The Story of the First Meeting', *Bean Na hÉireann*, July 1910, 3.
35. Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, 51.
36. Helena Molony, 'Editorial Notes', *Bean Na hÉireann*, August 1909.
37. The newspaper advertised and published reviews for books specifically aimed at an adolescent market. As a review of *The Book of Nuala: A Story for Irish Girls* points out, it is 'specially written for the girl in her teens' Maire De Builéir, 'The Book of Nuala: A Story for Irish Girls', *Bean Na hÉireann*, August 1909, 4. This novel was also as a book prize for the competitions in 'An Grianán' and the review also recommends it for this use: 'It is to be sincerely hoped that convent schools and other girls'

- schools will lay in a large supply of “The Book of Nuala,” as it is particularly suitable for a book prize’ De Buitléir, 5.
38. Helena Molony, ‘Editorial Notes’, *Bean Na hÉireann*, October 1909.
 39. Constance Markievicz, ‘Women, Ideals and the Nation’, in *Irish Feminisms, 1810–1930*, ed. Mary S. Pierse, vol. 1 (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 283.
 40. Markievicz, 286.
 41. Markievicz, 293–294.
 42. Markievicz, 293.
 43. Also tempting, is to think that this reference to the virgin huntress of Greek mythology, ‘Let the maiden of Ireland, fleet as Atalanta, never pause in the race for freedom’ (Markievicz, 14) was linked in some part to the popular girls’ periodical, *Atalanta* (1887–1898), edited by fellow Irishwoman, L.T. Meade—although Meade was not likely to share Markievicz’s radical politics, she was committed to female education and the celebration of Irish girls. Susan Cahill, ‘Where Are The Irish Girls? Girlhood, Irishness, and L.T. Meade’, in *Girlhood and the Politics of Place*, eds. Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 212–227.
 44. I will refer to Sydney Gifford Czira as Gifford for the remainder of this chapter.
 45. Anne Clare, *Unlikely Rebels: The Gifford Girls and the Fight for Irish Freedom* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2011), 135. Clare describes Ada’s infiltration of the American Vigilanties, a club set up by an Englishman with a membership of English expatriates and whose ‘chief ploy...was to insinuate that the Irish were German spies and to send gangs to break up Irish meetings. Ada was able to warn Clan na Gael when its meetings were to be attacked and was successful until her cover was blown’. Clare, 135–136.
 46. Frances Clarke, ‘Czira (Gifford), Sydney Madge (‘John Brennan’)’, in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, eds. James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a2356>; Frances Clarke, ‘Gifford, Grace (Evelyn) Plunkett’, eds. James McGuire and James Quinn, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3463#>; Patrick Long and Lawrence William White, ‘Donnelly, Helen Ruth (‘Nellie’) Gifford’, eds. James McGuire and James Quinn, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3464-B#B>; Foster, *Vivid Faces*.

47. Nadia Claire Smith, 'From Dundalk to Dublin: Dorothy Macardle's Narrative Journey on Radio Éireann', *The Irish Review*, no. 42 (Summer 2010): 34.
48. Clarke, 'Czira.'
49. John Brennan, 'Frivolity', *Bean Na hÉireann*, April 1910, 3.
50. Brennan, 3.
51. Brennan, 3, 4.
52. Brennan, 4.
53. Brennan, 5.
54. Brennan, 4.
55. Brennan, 4.
56. The emphasis on laughing is of particular interest here given its subversive possibilities. Anca Parvulescu, in her theorisation of the embodied act of laughing, emphasises its radical quality: 'it was often through laughter that "revolution" was revolutionized'. Anca Parvulescu, *Laughter: Notes on a Passion*, Short Circuits (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 17. Laughing, for Parvulescu, is necessarily disruptive of borders. She writes: 'One is "swept" by laughter; "overwhelmed" by laughter; one is "cracking up" in laughter; one is "breaking up" in laughter; one "drowns" in laughter' Parvulescu, 14. Gifford's emphasis on communal laughter as a means to generate the nation insists on inclusivity and openness and allows the girl to negotiate a space within the nation.
57. Brennan, 'Frivolity', 4–5.
58. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., eds., 'The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective Comparison, Multidirectional Citation', in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, Next Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 1.
59. Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood Through the Periodical Press, 1850–1915*, 1.
60. Mitchell, *The New Girl*, 183.
61. Nicholas Grene terms this figure the 'angel in the cottage' playing on the Victorian archetype of the angel in the house in a discussion of the ways in which representations of the young female characters in J.M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* that did not conform to Victorian gender roles contributed to the riots. Robert Quinn, *Playboys and Rebels*, DVD (Wildfire Films, 2007).
62. Maria Luddy, 'A "Sinister and Retrogressive" Proposal: Irish Women's Opposition to the 1937 Draft Constitution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 15 (2005): 175.
63. See James M. Smith, *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

64. Luddy, 'A "Sinister and Retrogressive" Proposal', 194.
65. Here, Gifford prefigures the assertion attributed to feminist anarchist Emma Goldman: 'If I can't dance I don't want to be part of your revolution'. Her actual words were: 'I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy' when told 'that it did not behove an agitator to dance'. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life (Two Volumes in One)* (Cosimo Inc., 2011), 56.
66. Indeed, ragtime pianist, Jelly Roll Morton, claimed that he invented jazz in 1902 and his 'Jelly Roll Blues', composed in 1905, would become the first piece of jazz to be published in 1915. Mervyn Cooke and David Horn, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), xiii. I must also thank my colleague at the School of Irish Studies, ethnomusicologist Prof. Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin who generously shared his expertise on Irish music and steered me in the right direction when searching for the implications of these references in an Irish context.
67. Peter Bailey, "'Hullo, Ragtime!'" West End Revue and the Americanisation of Popular Culture in Pre-1914 London', in *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin*, ed. Len Platt, Tobias Becker, and David Linton (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 148.
68. Bailey, 397.
69. Gifford Czira, *The Years Flew By: The Recollections of Madame Sydney Czira*, 5.
70. Weinbaum et al., 'The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective Comparison, Multidirectional Citation', 2, 9.
71. Weinbaum et al., 16.
72. Maire, 'Inghinidhe Na hÉireann: The Story of the First Meeting', 3.
73. Brennan, 'Frivolity', 7.



‘Stories of Ancient Days’: Mythological Constructs of Childhood in Independence Ireland

Rebecca Long

In the early part of the twentieth century in Ireland, writers who chose to retell episodes from the Ulster and Fenian Cycles of Irish mythology, and to reimagine the mythic childhoods of warrior figures such as Cuchulainn and Fionn Mac Cumhaill, produced particular constructions of the Irish child. Reimagination of mythological episodes was undertaken for a variety of narrative and ideological purposes, the central one being to infuse the contemporary culture of Irish children with a knowledge of an ancient past, and this was fundamentally connected to the Cultural Revival’s visions for a new sense of Irish selfhood and identity, incorporating Ireland’s mythological past into contemporary cultural narratives. These visions arguably influenced the tumultuous pre-independence period, specifically contributing to the culturally and symbolically charged heroic figures that Cuchulainn and Fionn became within the larger discourse of nationhood. This chapter will focus on the

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ways in which the constructions of these mythic figures as children in texts produced for child readers contributed to the ongoing development of Irish identity in this period and on the idea that the ideal Irish nationalist youth became connected to and was embodied in these same images and depictions of Cúchulainn and Fionn Mac Cumhaill.

If, as Mary Shine Thompson posits, ‘childhood provided nineteenth [and twentieth] century Ireland with ... an important vehicle for promoting and embedding its ideals’,¹ it is crucial to examine at least some of the ways in which childhood itself was depicted for children in this period. The mythic childhoods of Fionn in the Fenian Cycle—and his counterpart from the Ulster Cycle, Cúchulainn—provided writers in the early twentieth century with the means to communicate ideologies of nationhood, independence, and civic duty to young readers; retelling and reimagining mythological narratives became a means of inducting a new generation of citizens into the dialogue surrounding Irish independence. The ‘nationalist child’² as constructed by cultural nationalists became a child who could receive knowledge about its cultural and mythological heritage through retold narratives.

While children were nominally included as citizens of the Irish Republic ‘in its ideal and real form’,³ their role as citizens was never articulated. Childhood, as a state of existence and a diversity of experiences, ‘is notably absent from [Republicanism’s] conceptual arena’.⁴ But I argue that the idea of the child as a participant in a dialogue of nationalism is staged within certain texts written for and available to children during the independence period that engaged with constructions of mythic childhoods. Woven throughout both representations of Fionn’s childhood discussed here—Violet Russell’s *Heroes of the Dawn* (1913) and James Stephens’ *Irish Fairytales* (1920)—is the idea of the child warrior preparing to sacrifice himself or to undertake a duty that effectively ends his childhood. In both texts, Fionn guards Tara, even though the gathered heroes of King Conn’s court refuse to volunteer. Childhood may have been absent from the republican conceptual arena, but it was viewed by some writers—writing both before and after the 1916 Rising—as a more dynamic zone. Texts such as Alice Dease’s *Old Time Stories of Erin* (1907), Ella Young’s *Celtic Wonder Tales* (1910), and Padraic Colum’s *The King of Ireland’s Son* (1916) all articulate the idea of child and young adult reader engaging with and contributing to the cultural heritage of the emerging nation. If an aim of the Revival was ‘a resuscitation of elder Irish values and culture’⁵ through literature, then

certain writers, including those discussed here, recognised childhood as a responsive state where those endangered values might not only be preserved but reimagined and revitalised. Many Revivalist writers were associated through 'cultural nationalism...romanticism, [and a] preoccupation with heroism'⁶ and their abiding interest in folklore and mythology. It follows then that texts produced for children during and after the Revival were infused with these same concerns.

At least three retellings of the myth of Cuchulainn were published between 1892 and 1902, namely Standish O'Grady's *The Coming of Cuchulain* (1892), Eleanor Hull's *Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster* (1898), and Lady Augusta Gregory's *Cuchulainn of Muirthemne* (1902). In their prefaces, all three authors engage with the concept of retelling these mythological episodes for a new generation of child readers. Each of these retellings engages extensively with Cuchulainn's mythic childhood, presenting him as a child destined for warriorhood. Pat Donlon, writing on the wider landscape of publishing for children at this time, refers to a 'Juvenile Literati'⁷ of which Standish O'Grady and other authors mentioned here were members. Donlon argues that O'Grady pioneered a new kind of subject matter for Irish literature and that this 'imaginative writing' inspired by 'Irish magic, myth, and heroism proved eminently suitable reading for young children'.⁸ From Edmund Leamy's *Irish Fairy Tales* (1890) through to Alice Dease's *Old Time Stories of Erin* (1907) and Ella Young's *Celtic Wonder Tales* (1910), the production of literature for children in Ireland is dominated by material from Irish mythology—from the Mythological, Ulster, and Fenian cycles—and by a desire to specifically retell these narratives for children, not only for their literary merit but also for their relevance to contemporary discourses of identity and nationhood.

The preoccupation with ideas of heroism and the symbolism associated with the ideas of the Revival allowed the writers in question here to engage with and construct experiences of childhood through the medium of mythology, through a corpus of literature replete with heroic child figures. Russell and Stephens produced texts that engaged with the aesthetic and artistic functions of childhood in a specific narrative sense; in choosing to narrate the childhoods of heroic figures, these authors presented childhood as an empowering phase of development and as a preparatory phase within the larger experience of citizenship. The heroic child figure comes to symbolise the potential of the child reader or child citizen to contribute to the future of the developing state.

Violet Russell's *Heroes of the Dawn* (1914) and James Stephens' *Irish Fairy Tales* (1920) bookend one of the seminal events in Irish history—the 1916 Easter Rising. Their respective representations of the childhood of Fionn Mac Cumhaill, the hero of the Fenian Cycle in Irish mythology, are part of the cultural production for children in this period, offering conduits into narratives of Irish identity and nationhood and functioning as a means of creating a new generation of culturally aware child citizens. In considering these mythological heroes as children, and in choosing to narrate their childhoods, these authors were attempting to induct their child readers into an awareness of their duties as citizens, an awareness infused with knowledge of Ireland's mythological history. The existence of these and other texts and the founding of the youth group Na Fianna Éireann provided literary and practical experiences to the children of Ireland in the period leading up to Irish independence from Britain. These experiences were fundamentally inspired by Ireland's mythological past and mediated through the childhoods of Fionn Mac Cumhaill and Cuchulainn of Ulster.

Na Fianna Éireann was a youth organisation founded in 1909 by Bulmer Hobson, a leading member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and Countess Constance Markievicz, the revolutionary nationalist and socialist. A nationalist, non-sectarian youth organisation, the Fianna was designed to appeal to boys between eight and eighteen, although a girls' *sluagh* or troop was later started in Belfast. By looking back to the value systems expounded by the mythic Fianna of the Fenian Cycle, the organisation aimed to prepare boys and girls 'for their future role in the fight for Irish freedom...[promoting] role models for them to emulate'⁹ and providing an Irish nationalist education and military training. What Marnie Hay calls 'the ideal nationalist boy'¹⁰ joined Na Fianna Éireann in preparation to play an active role in the fight for Irish independence, becoming, at least symbolically, a soldier of Fionn's Fianna. The *Fianna Handbook* (1914), published by the Central Council of Na Fianna Éireann, contained an introduction by Countess Markievicz and emphasised traits such as 'self-reliance, obedience, discipline, loyalty, trust, and manliness',¹¹ qualities also associated with Mac Cumhaill's Fianna, and the Red Branch Knights of Ulster.¹² Members were charged never to 'do anything that would bring discredit upon Ireland or upon the Fianna'.¹³

Between 1910 and 1916, columns for children and young people appeared in a number of nationalist publications: the republican newspaper *Irish Freedom* (1910–1914), the Fianna articles in the *Irish Volunteer*

newspaper (1914–1916), and the nationalist paper for boys, *Fianna* (1915–1916). Marnie Hay contends that the youth content in these publications served numerous purposes, not least to provide and promote an idealised image of Irish nationalist youth that young people could aspire to.¹⁴ Padraig Pearse contributed a chapter to the *Fianna Handbook* chronicling the three traditions of the Fianna in Ireland—Fionn Mac Cumhaill's Fianna, the Fenians of the nineteenth century, and the Fianna boy scout movement—before focusing on the tradition surrounding Fionn's Fianna. Unlike Russell and Stephens, Pearse does not engage in a retelling of the deeds of Fionn and the Fianna, focusing instead on the historical authenticity of the Fianna.¹⁵ Pearse wholly subscribed to 'the pedagogical value of having children's versions of Irish myths and legends available'¹⁶ to child readers and students. In his contribution to the *Fianna Handbook* and in his other writings, Pearse connects the idea of the ideal Irish nationalist youth to the images and depictions of Fionn Mac Cumhaill available to child readers in this period through retellings of the hero's mythological cycle, stating that 'the story of those Fianna of Fionn should be part of the daily thought of every Irish boy'.¹⁷ Pádraic Frehan notes that by the latter half of the nineteenth century, education was one of the central strands in the discourses surrounding the construction and experience of Irish identity, and that the education of the country's youth was coming under the influence of the nationalist movement.¹⁸ Figures like Pearse relied on a combination of literature, mythology, politics, and national education to pursue an independent Ireland.¹⁹ The cycles of Irish mythology became mainstays of educational textbooks produced in this period, meaning that child readers were exposed to these cycles not just in literature but also in educational material as well.²⁰

The heroic images, not only of mythic Irish warriors like Fionn and Cuchulainn but also of their childhoods, resonated within the nationalist project that children were being encouraged to engage with. Through the images of heroic childhoods constructed and presented in the narratives considered here, child readers were encouraged to engage with the notion of their developing involvement in the future of the nation; just as Fionn Mac Cumhaill grew into the warrior figure of myth, so the readers of these texts would grow into young citizens. In this way, ideas surrounding national identity, duty to the nation, and civic involvement were presented in accessible, even exciting ways through narrative to child readers who were being constructed as the natural inheritors of this material.

ANCIENT VALUES AND RETOLD MYTHS

The existence of Na Fianna Éireann and the *Fianna Handbook* promoted the reintroduction of ancient heroic values into the experiences of youths in Ireland during the independence period, with candidates for the organisation having to pass test on Irish language, history, and heritage.²¹ Children were familiar with the concept of the Fianna and its mythological significance, meaning they could engage with the retellings examined here on both an individual and a communal level. James Stephens was an advocate of the Irish language, a republican, and a close friend of Thomas MacDonagh, one of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation; he was fundamentally invested in the discourses surrounding the idea of the heroic and the power of the hero figure in Irish mythology, and how that influence might be reintroduced into contemporary Irish society through images.

Unlike other writers in this period who were engaging with mythological narratives, Stephens was at pains to establish that he did not write for children and that the work he produced, such as *The Crock of Gold* and *The Charwoman's Daughter* from 1912, and indeed *Irish Fairy Tales* from 1920, was not aimed at a child audience. Edmund Leamy had published his *Irish Fairy Tales* in 1890, writing expressly for children and choosing the fairy tale form as the medium through which he would engage with Irish mythology. This was because of the form's cultural association with children and childhood, fairy tales having been culturally associated with children for centuries.²² Whether Stephens realised it or not, Leamy had already established a connection between fairy tales, Irish mythology and depictions of childhood; Leamy's narratives feature children as their primary protagonists. So, in choosing, like Leamy, the fairy tale form to retell the myth of Fionn's childhood, Stephens was, regardless of his intent, contributing to the production of children's literature in the period. The text's presence in the Pollard Collection of Children's Books in Trinity College Dublin supports the idea that children were readers of Stephens' fairy tales, if not his intended audience. The images of Fionn's boyhood as retold by Stephens resonated within the larger discourse of nationalism and the role of the new generation of young citizens in contemporary Irish society, precisely because Stephens uses Fionn's childhood to articulate a very specific vision of the hero figure, and of the ways in which heroic deeds function in Irish

mythology and in Irish culture. Archetypal stories and fairy tales are, on the one hand, simple narratives, replete with images. On the other hand, in the context of a system of representation, they are 'a reflection of time itself',²³ a way to talk about the universe. They are 'functions of a whole',²⁴ revealing complex meaning as the system expands with each retelling. The particular framing context of both texts discussed here is not just a narrative or even an aesthetic context; it is a wider cultural and political context wherein these retold stories of heroic childhoods are infused with ideological significance in order to educate young readers about concepts of citizenship and national duty.

Violet Russell published *Heroes of the Dawn* in 1913. A writer and theosophist, she was married to George Russell, the artist, writer and nationalist activist, and was arguably at the centre of cultural and artistic life in Dublin during the independence period. Russell dedicates her retelling of the Fionn Mac Cumhaill saga to her children, Brian and Diarmuid, to whom she once told 'these stories of ancient days' when the events and figures they depicted were 'part of every one's life and every one's belief'.²⁵ In retelling these stories, she is attempting to reinfuse the childhoods of her readers with the essence of mythological Ireland. She states that it is because her own children cared for these stories that she has chosen to rewrite some of those about Fionn and his warriors, 'thinking that other children might wish...to know something about...the Fianna Éireann'.²⁶ The use of that specific term is significant here; usually Fionn's warriors are referred to as the Fianna, but this fuller title could constitute a reference to the youth organisation discussed above and to the prevailing youth culture of the period. For Russell, these stories represent more than 'mere adventure or enchantment'.²⁷ Rather, they are a record of ancient times, and of the values that constituted heroism in Ireland's mythological past, namely a sense of

absolute truthfulness and courtesy in thought and speech and action; a nobility and chivalry of mind which refused to believe evil of anyone, and was ever read to praise the good in an enemy; and a generosity which would give til the very end.²⁸

The heroes of whom she writes 'knew that in possessing these qualities they owned a greater wealth than any king of the world had power to bestow',²⁹ and it is precisely this wealth that Russell wishes for her

readers: these stories provide access to that wealth and to a template of citizenship for a child readership that is being constructed as ideal future citizens. Before commencing her retelling of Fionn's exploits, Russell's narrator states that to 'make the following stories more interesting I will tell you something about...Fionn's boyhood'.³⁰ In order to engage her child readers, Russell is presenting them with a series of experiences with which they can empathise and relate to, in order to contextualise the life of the warrior Fionn will become. His childhood is essential to his relationship to Ireland and to his role as its defender. Russell presents her readers with a rural childhood, constructing Fionn as a child at ease with nature and empowered by his own physicality.

In Russell's text, Fionn's mother Muireen travels in secrecy to see Fionn, six years after the battle that decimated her husband's clan, and asks the Druidesses who are his guardians 'to still protect her child, and teach him all that a Fian should know' so that when he is older, 'he could take vengeance on the Clan Morna for the death of his father Cumall'.³¹ Already, even though Fionn is barely seven years old, an obligation and a destiny have been laid on him. This marks a pattern in the portrayal of warrior childhoods in the texts considered here: an exceptional child displays prowess and skill in early childhood, and demands are placed on that child, and limits attached to his childhood, by external forces.

The construction of Fionn's rural childhood is a focus for both Russell and Stephens. Russell's narrator states that though very young, Fionn 'already showed signs of that bravery and undaunted courage'³² for which he would become legendary in later years. As a child, we are told, 'he would go hunting by himself through forest and over mountain' (14)—his childhood is shaped and influenced by the landscape through which he moves, growing and developing as a hunter, running 'down the swift deer on foot',³³ learning to exist in harmony with his surroundings. Stephens describes a world attuned to the dimensions of Fionn's childhood and to his own childlike physicality. For 'little Fionn' there would have been 'long hours of lonely sunshine...when existence passed like a shade among shadows',³⁴ and the experience of time was fundamentally connected to the environment around him. In this way, in both texts, Fionn is intimately connected to the landscape of his childhood, ultimately pledging his physical body to defend it. Here, as though responding to Fionn's child body, the landscape unfolds itself

in 'little snaky paths narrow enough to be filled by his own feet'.³⁵ Stephens' portrayal of the childhood of a boy who will grow into a warrior becomes a universal childhood, where Fionn, as most young children do, thinks 'of his own door as the beginning and end of the world'.³⁶ There is a powerful and invigorating emphasis on childhood experiences in Stephens' narrative; the boy Fionn explores wells, and climbs trees, surveying the forest landscape from his vantage points and participating in 'the eternal silence to which one listened and at which one tried to look'.³⁷ Fionn inhabits his childhood to the limits of his physical capabilities, even as tales of his father structure his growing perception of the world and his place in it. He receives his heritage through story, and through the act of retelling, just as Stephens' child readers receive their heritage through a narrative focalised through a mythic child figure.

Russell picks up Fionn's educational life again when he comes to the poet Finnegas, to learn not just the art of poetry but also 'all that was known of the past history of his country'.³⁸ Knowledge of Ireland, its pasts, and its stories represent development for Fionn here; he must learn about the past before he can move forward into his own future—Russell's ideal child reader must do the same. During his time with the old poet, Fionn catches the Salmon of Knowledge and becomes the first person to taste its flesh. From the time he touches the salmon, it is said that he 'had knowledge of both the past and the future' and that when he wished to know anything, he would place his thumb in his mouth 'and nothing was hidden from him'.³⁹ At the culmination of his education, knowledge becomes innate for Fionn, something he must look for within himself. It is significant that in Russell's retelling, Fionn's adult name comes from a prophecy relating to the Salmon of Knowledge and effectively signifies the end of his boyhood but not of his youth. In Stephens' retelling, his name is conferred on him by a group of his peers, as they recognise that he is not an ordinary boy like them. In the one instance, he is fated to carry the name he will be remembered by, and in the other, he receives it through the perception of other children and their acknowledgement of his extraordinary childhood. Even as he is placed apart from those children, Fionn, as he moves towards his young warriorhood, is constructed as a role model for them to emulate; they will, in turn, become warriors in his wake. Arguably then, this construction of Fionn as the child warrior in waiting speaks to the culture

of volunteering and dedication to the cause of Ireland espoused by the Fianna Éireann; just as Fionn provides a role model for his contemporaries, his status as a child warrior provides a template for the child reader to emulate.

In Stephens' text, Fionn's time with Finnegas the poet provides him with a holistic education; as the day packs 'its load of strength into his frame, so it add[s] its store of knowledge to his mind'.⁴⁰ The focus on Fionn's developing child body remains, with Stephens' narrator at pains to record the burgeoning of his mental prowess as well. So life continues 'in a round of timeless time',⁴¹ a round of preparation for the moment when Fionn's childhood will come to an end and he will become a young warrior. In Russell's text, Fionn's early childhood is concluded only when the two Druidesses have taught him 'all their ancient wisdom' (14) and constructed him as a potential warrior imbued with the knowledge 'to be noble and courteous in deed and speech'⁴²; particularly in Russell's text, progress through childhood is equated with learning the necessary skills to fulfil a specific destiny, role, or obligation that remains to be encountered in the future.

During his wanderings, Russell's Fionn is 'unknown as the son of Cumall'⁴³; he is essentially anonymous as he moves through the landscape of Ireland, gaining fame as a warrior 'though he [is] still a lad in years'.⁴⁴ This idea of a young boy assuming the role of a warrior and committing deeds and accruing experiences normally associated with a hero figure of older years is a powerful symbol within the context of the tales being retold here. Presenting a young warrior hero to a child audience, a warrior hero who inspires loyalty to a higher cause and commitment to a set of specific values necessarily engages with the dialogues of nationalism and national identity that dominated the cultural and social life of Ireland in the period. Indeed, as part of the image of nationalist youth promoted by the Fianna Éireann, members were expected to be prepared 'to make the ultimate sacrifice to attain Irish independence'.⁴⁵ In Countess Markievicz's introduction to the *Fianna Handbook*, she stated that those members—young boys and girls—would not 'flinch' if the 'path to freedom'⁴⁶ led to their deaths, just as it had for the leading figures of previous Irish revolutions. Participating in the 1913 Lockout, the Howth Gun-Running, and the 1916 Rising, the young members of Na Fianna risked their lives to follow this ethos.

For Stephens, Fionn begins to move beyond boyhood in the company of other boys—a gathering at Moy na Life, by the river. On his travels, still

identifying himself as Deimne, Fionn observes a group of boys playing—just as Cuchulainn, in the Ulster Cycle, observes the boy candidates for the Red Branch Knights at Emain Macha before he joins them—and because ‘boys must know what another boy can do’,⁴⁷ he is soon invited to compete with them. Fionn correctly perceives the invitation as a challenge; indeed, it ‘is almost, among boys, a declaration of war’.⁴⁸ In the skirmish that follows, he bests every boy on the field and they recognise him as being superior to them, both in physicality and in temperament. It is the boys who give him the name Fionn or ‘the Fair One’,⁴⁹ and in perhaps one of Stephens’ most significant observations, his narrator states that ‘his name came from boys, and will, perhaps, be preserved by them’.⁵⁰ A boy hero will be remembered by boys. Fionn is one of Walter Ong’s ‘heavy figures’,⁵¹ an archetypal character around whom stories collect and settle in oral culture—his deeds make him easy to remember. In play, in legend, and in example, preservation of these stories occurs; generations later, child readers reimagine the myth of Fionn through texts produced for them by adult writers, even as organisations like Na Fianna Éireann actively promote his values, precepts, and heroic qualities as valid templates for the life of a young citizen in a country striving for independence. The Fianna Éireann endorsed what Marnie Hay calls ‘suitable role models for Irish boys’.⁵² Given that a Fianna member was to learn ‘all about his country, its history and language ... [and] to serve it to the best of his ability’⁵³ and that the Fianna were led by Fionn Mac Cumhaill in the Fenian Cycle, it is clear that Fionn himself was the ultimate role model and his movement from childhood into adulthood provided a template for the youth of the organisation named for his band of warriors.

Both Stephens and Russell choose to retell the ‘Enchantment of Tara’ episode, marking as it does, the end of Fionn’s boyhood and his movement into both recognition and adulthood. This particular story takes place on the eve of Samhain at Tara where the High King and all his nobles are gathered to celebrate the feast of that festival. Russell’s narrator tells us that the High King Conn looks at Fionn, ‘wondering who this youth, with the form of a hero, and the face of a young, untried boy’⁵⁴ could be. This juxtaposition of his physical presence against his youth is meaningful on a number of levels. Fionn is a child warrior, a boy hero, and in the tale of his childhood, his power seems to derive, at least initially, from the pureness of his youth; while still a child figure with whom child readers can empathise, Fionn is also a hero figure who they can emulate. Stephens’ narrator tells his readers that ‘this is how

Tara was when Tara was'.⁵⁵ Tara is no more, but the stories that tell of it still remain. In a way then, so long as the stories are retold, Tara still is—existing both in the distant mythological past of Ireland and in the contemporary present, in the imaginations of a new generation of young readers.

In Russell's retelling, Fionn declares himself to be Fionn mac Cumall, son of the chief of the Clan Basna, and King Conn accepts him into his service and seats him beside his own son, Art the Lonely. Shortly after this, the King addresses the gathered nobles and asks if there is any among them who will 'take it upon himself to keep guard over Tara'⁵⁶ and kill the enchanter Aillen mac Midna, who destroys Tara every year on the eve of Samhain. Knowing that they are powerless against the magic sleep Aillen sends against Conn's men, the nobles remain silent. But one 'clear, youth voice' rings through the hall, as 'the boy Fionn' pledges to guard Tara. Russell is at pains to highlight Fionn's youth against the combined ages of the seasoned warriors in the hall, who laugh when 'the boy [stands] up and [speaks] so bravely',⁵⁷ taking on himself the defence of Tara, when not even the most courageous man present would volunteer himself in the same way. For Stephens', the moment when Fionn declares himself is crucial. In the great hall, in the midst of the feast, King Conn of the Hundred Battles calls out to Fionn, wishing to welcome him to Tara. The young man that Fionn has become moves forward, and the language Stephens uses to describe him shifts perceptibly; he is now 'greater-shouldered than any mighty man of that gathering' and he is 'longer and cleaner-limbed, with his fair curls dancing around his beardless face'.⁵⁸ He is simultaneously manlier and more youthful than any other warrior in the hall, and the moment when he identifies himself as Fionn, the son of Uail, the son of Baiscne in front of the King, is the moment when he truly accepts the heritage that he has been training to understand since he was a small child. This idea of origins is especially important in the contemporary context of the time. The Cultural Revival out of which these authors were writing was a movement concerned with notions of 'essence and origins'⁵⁹ in which reclaiming a national heritage by, among other initiatives, engaging with the cycles of Irish mythology. The pasts to which the Revivalist writers sought to look back to were 'mythic rather than essentially historic',⁶⁰ and the literature produced during this period became 'an integral part of nationalist consciousness raising'.⁶¹ The fact that some of this literature, including the texts in question here, were written specifically for

children speaks to the belief of these authors that child readers could participate in the shared experience of nation building. Knowledge of Ireland's ancient pasts is crucial for a young generation of future citizens and their ability to engage with the struggle for Irish independence.

Fionn himself now becomes part of a new generation of heroes in Tara, the centre of power in Ireland, just as child readers in this period are being constructed as part of a new generation of culturally aware citizens. Russell's narrator notes how the King considers Fionn, and how 'some glint in the boy's blue eyes' and 'a curious light which now and again flash[es] and [shines] round his head'⁶² give Conn hope that Tara might not fall. This strange light recalls the hero light that shines above Cuchulainn's head as the battle rage descends on him, even in childhood.⁶³ The King himself articulates the dynamic between Fionn's heroism and his youth when he says 'though your years are only those of a boy, your spirit is that of a hero'.⁶⁴ Before Fiacha the weaponsmith leaves Fionn, he looks into the boy's face and says 'There is a light in your eyes to-night, boy...which recalls to my mind all the high thoughts and noble dreams of my youth'⁶⁵; standing guard at Tara, Fionn becomes the personification of youthful strength and promise, the boy warrior who will succeed where older men have failed. Russell seems to be connecting this idea of youth and promise to the future, in the context of a new generation. This is a common idea in texts for adults produced during this period as well but by choosing to retell these tales specifically for children, Russell is creating a dialogue between the child reader and the cultural heritage of Irish mythology. Fionn speaks with a wisdom Fiacha 'thought only the old possessed; a wisdom taught by much suffering and many failures'.⁶⁶ Here, at this moment in his boyhood, he represents the powerful intersection between youth and experience.

RECOVERED PASTS AND MYTHOLOGICAL IDENTITIES

In his book *Celtic Revivals* (1985), Seamus Deane writes that ultimately Irish writers had to find some way, in terms of narrative and aesthetic, of dealing with history, language, and landscape and 'the various ideologies of the recovered past which grew out of them'.⁶⁷ Their readers had to find some way of engaging with that same history and with those ideologies. The narratives of Fionn retold by Russell and Stephens represent the recovered pasts of Ireland: myths retold for children in an attempt to infuse the experiences of childhood in the period with a sense and an

awareness of the mythical heritage of the nation. Laurence Coupe writes that mythology is 'the body of inherited myths in any culture'.⁶⁸ If this is true, then the myths retold in the texts considered here are part of a cultural inheritance. In that context, and because these texts deal so specifically with mythic childhoods, the ways in which their authors construct those childhoods must be examined. In order for those readers to become the natural inheritors of these myths, that inheritance must be retold for them. They are the primary consumers of the images of childhood these authors construct and produce. If 'literature is a means of extending mythology',⁶⁹ I posit that the process of retelling these myths adds to their meaning, recontextualising them for a contemporary audience. If myths 'create or recreate certain narratives which human beings take to be crucial to their understanding of their world',⁷⁰ then the act of retelling myths for child readers can only be a meaningful action, framing and influencing the way those child readers interpret the society in which they operate.

So, the texts considered here operate in multiple contexts within what Coupe calls the work of myth. The mythological narratives of Fionn's deeds and exploits serve to order the ancient chaos of Irish civilisation, explaining and reconciling a lost mythological past, while the retellings of these myths are generated stories resonating with and aiding child readers to engage with the concepts of identity, belonging and duty on individual and national levels. The stories we tell 'contribute to children's sense of identity, an identity that is both personal and social'⁷¹ and, arguably, metaphysical. The mythological narratives considered here, retold for children, present a particular vision or experience of childhood framed by an ideology of nationhood. Benedict Anderson calls nationality and nationness 'cultural artefacts of a particular kind',⁷² artefacts whose meanings change over time. The texts examined here function in the same way; with each retelling for a new generation, their cultural meaning changes, contributing, in this context to the dialogues of nationhood that dominated the independence period. Anderson's concept of imagined communities is particularly relevant here; that each participant engages with that community on an individual basis, and yet is aware that others are engaging with it in precisely the same way, and is 'reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life'.⁷³ A generation of child readers engaging with retold myths constitute such an imagined community.

NOTES

1. Mary Shine Thompson, ed., *Young Irelands: Studies in Children's Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), 9.
2. *Ibid.*, 12.
3. Mary Shine Thompson, 'Republicanism and Childhood in Twentieth-Century Ireland', *The Republic: A Journal of Contemporary and Historical Debate* 3 (July 2003): 90.
4. *Ibid.*
5. John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 4.
6. *Ibid.*, xi.
7. Pat Donlon, 'Books for Irish Children', in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Irish Book, Volume V: The Irish Book in English, 1891–2000*, eds. Claire Hutton and Patrick Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 371.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Marnie Hay, 'This Treasured Island: Irish Nationalist Propaganda Aimed at Children and Youth, 1910–16', in *Treasure Islands: Studies in Irish Children's Literature*, eds. Mary Shine Thompson and Celia Keenan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006).
10. *Ibid.*, 38.
11. *Ibid.*
12. In 1914, the Christian Brothers began publishing the *Our Boys* magazine, providing historical and mythological based content, with what Michael Flanagan calls 'a pronounced stress on the Catholic element of the Irish national experience.' The chivalry of the Red Branch Knights featured in narratives 'designed to illustrate the long pedigree [and] legitimacy of the Irish civilisation.' See, Michael Flanagan, "'There Is an Isle in the Western Ocean': The Christian Brothers, *Our Boys* and Catholic/Nationalist Ideology', in *Treasure Islands: Studies in Irish Children's Literature*, eds. Mary Shine Thompson and Celia Keenan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 47.
13. Padraig O'Riain, ed., *Fianna Handbook* (Dublin: Central Council of Na Fianna Eireann, 1914), 23–24.
14. Hay, 'Irish Nationalist Propaganda', 33–34.
15. In June 1900 Pearse published the text of a lecture he had delivered entitled "The Fenians and Fenian Lore" which Philip O'Leary states is "largely concerned with the historicity of Fionn and his Fianna." See, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881–1921: Ideology and Innovation*, 248.
16. Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004), 92.

17. Padraig O'Riain, *The Fianna Handbook* (Dublin: Central Council of Na Fianna Éireann, 1914), 151.
18. Padraic Frehan, *Education and Celtic Mythology: National Self-Image and Schoolbooks in 20th Century Ireland* (London: Rodolphi, 2012), 95.
19. Ibid.
20. For a more detailed discussion of the prevalence of mythological material in educational textbooks for children in this period, see Pádraic Frehan's *Education and Celtic Myth*, 'Politics, Education and Mythology: 1808–1922', 95–116.
21. Marnie Hay, 'Moulding the Future: Ni Fianna Éireann and Its Members, 1909–1923', *Studies, An Irish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 400 (2011): 447.
22. Maria Tatar notes that fairy tales are 'the most powerfully formative tales of childhood and permeate mass media for children and adults' (xi), and have done so for generations, with authors such as Charles Perrault designating his work as old wives' tales, told by governesses and grandmothers to children, and Charles Dickens propounding fairy tales as 'a kind of holy scripture' (xi) for children. The fairy tale form has been and is fundamentally associated with a child audience. See Maria Tatar, 'Introduction', in *The Classic Fairy Tales* (New York: Norton, 1999), ix–xviii.
23. Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha Von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 47.
24. Ibid., 49.
25. Violet Russell, *Heroes of the Dawn* (Dublin: Macmillan, 1914), ix.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 11.
31. Ibid., 13.
32. Ibid., 14.
33. Ibid.
34. James Stephens, *Irish Fairy Tales* (Dublin: Macmillan, 1920), 41.
35. Ibid., 37.
36. Ibid., 38.
37. Ibid., 42.
38. Russell, *Heroes of the Dawn*, 15.
39. Ibid., 17.
40. Stephens, *Irish Fairy Tales*, 68.
41. Ibid., 68.
42. Ibid., Russell, 15–16.

43. Ibid., 15.
44. Ibid.
45. Hay, 'Moulding the Future', 447.
46. O'Riain, *Fianna Handbook*, 14.
47. Stephens, *Irish Fairy Tales*, 60.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., 61.
51. Ibid., 70.
52. Hay, 'Moulding the Future', 447.
53. See, The Fianna Code of Honour, 1929, NLI, MS 10,910.
54. Russell, *Heroes of the Dawn*, 20.
55. Stephens, *Irish Fairy Tales*, 73.
56. Russell, *Heroes of the Dawn*, 25.
57. Ibid., 26–27.
58. Stephens, *Irish Fairy Tales*, 76.
59. G.J. Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O'Casey* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 2.
60. Shaun Richards, 'Polemics on the Irish Past: The "Return to the Source" in Irish Literary Revivals', *History Workshop* 31 (Spring, 1991): 123.
61. Roy Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1980–1923* (London: Penguin, 2015), 81.
62. Russell, *Heroes of the Dawn*, 27.
63. In *The Hound of Ulster* (1898), Eleanor Hull writes that the 'hero-fury' comes on the boy Cuchulain [sic] when he comes upon the boy-corps of the Red Branch Knights at Emain Macha, and that 'in his wrath and fierceness it seem[s] as though a light pour[s] forth from each single hair, crowning him with a crown of fire', 30.
65. Ibid., 30.
66. Ibid.
67. Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature* (London: Faber & Faber, 1985), 14.
68. Laurence Coupe, *Myth* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 4.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Tony Watkins, 'Cultural Studies, New Historicism and Children's Literature', in *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 1992), 183.
72. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 4.
73. Ibid., 30.

PART III

Material Culture and Organised Activity



Toys, Material Culture and Play Space in Ireland: The Iveagh Trust Play Centre

Vanessa Rutherford

INTRODUCTION

Toys, material culture and various iterations and ideas of play space can be read as ‘constructing’ Irish children in complex ways. Collectively, they form part of a social space that firstly signifies a world apart, a childhood space, with its own logic, objects and landmarks that distinguish it from adult reality and secondly, they signify the role of the child’s body as central to a social space into which children may pass.¹ Constructions of children and childhood in the period were cast along (1) biological and physiological notions of development in the lifecycle and (2) bourgeois notions of domesticity, home, family and gender.

The word ‘child’ is defined as biological, legal and cultural.² Childhood or the state of being a child is ‘a chronological stage and a mental construct, an existential fact and a locus of desire, a mythological country continuously mapped by grownups and recognized as a crucial time within the lifecycle, after infancy and before emerging adulthood’.³

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A naturalistic definition of children, with an empirical and scientific basis, emerged during the Enlightenment.⁴ The resultant nineteenth-century shift in emphasis on childhood as the *ground floor* of human development and its subsequent growth towards civilisation reflected changing scientific, social, cultural and political attitudes and behaviours. Whilst some saw the ages between birth and thirteen as a mass of native and savage urges that needed to be tamed, civilised and controlled, others approached it more reverently and focused on an association between primitive life and paradise.⁵ The rhetoric of innocence and science fused, and childhood in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ireland represented a site of pedagogy and socialisation, a domain colonised by a range of social agents and practices—parents, doctors, health visitors, social workers, educational psychologists, educators, church, artists and manufacturers.⁶

Childhood is an organic sociocultural construct that is designed around the ontological development of human beings. Biological and physiological changes occur as individuals develop, but the cultural ideals and the meaning of children and childhood vary across time and place. This chapter will explore the world of the Iveagh Trust Play Centre, Dublin, established in 1909. The play centre represented a childhood space as lived through its associated toys and material culture and provides a context from which to expose concepts and beliefs, identities and behavioural enactments that crucially influenced, enabled and constrained conceptions, representations, relationships and actualities of childhood in Ireland in the early twentieth century.⁷ This study of toys, material culture and various iterations and ideas of play space from the period 1910 to 1940 represents a worthy topic of historical inquiry and offers a richness of the study of childhood within an Irish context that has yet to be undertaken. Drawing on primary historical material, this chapter employs a critical discourse analysis to describe, interpret and explain the ways in which toys, material culture and various iterations and ideas of play space in a Dublin Play Centre setting contextualised and mediated childhood experiences, provided structure and form to children's lived experiences and tacitly evoked exchanges and possibilities between children and children's bodies. On the whole, this topic has remained under-researched by historians in an Irish context.

The historical analysis of nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries primary materials relating to the Iveagh Trust Play Centre yielded three main historical constructions that specifically frame this chapter:

(1) childhood as conceived, (2) childhood as perceived, and (3) childhood as 'lived' experience.⁸ Each construction will be considered in turn following a review of literature relating to children's material culture.

RESEARCHING CHILDREN'S MATERIAL CULTURE

This chapter takes up the understudied relationship between the cultural history of childhood and children's material culture in Ireland. Internationally, there has been significant interdisciplinary research that has transformed childhood studies. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of academic work that explores historical constructions of Irish childhood. Philippe Aries propagated the view that childhood is socially constructed and impacted by the historical and cultural setting. Aries provides a mythical account of the construction of childhood based on his interpretations of art and iconography.⁹ Lloyd de Mause, Lawrence Stone and Edward Shorter propose a decisive change in attitudes to and the treatment of children through time.¹⁰ Historian Hugh Cunningham traced the process of childhood from 1500 as reflecting a middle-class ideology of child sanctification, 'the child had become endowed with qualities which made it Godlike, fit to be worshipped, and the embodiment of hope'.¹¹

Allison James and Alan Prout argue that 'the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which it is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture'.¹² They suggest that there is a growing body of research that identifies an emergent paradigm for the study of childhood. Key features of the paradigm are: childhood is understood as a social construction; childhood is a variable of social analysis; children's relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right; children should be seen as active social agents; and studying childhood involves an engagement with the process of reconstructing childhood in society and separate from the adult world. This body of literature captures something of the experience of being a child, and this chapter takes up this challenge in an Irish context.

The international focus on children, childhood and material culture is evidenced in a range of interdisciplinary work.¹³ Jane Eva Baxter illustrates the importance of studying children as active participants in past cultures. Using the critical concepts of gender and socialisation, she develops new theoretical and methodological approaches for the archaeological study of children and childhood. Baxter presents the

archaeology of childhood as a vibrant field of specialised interest within archaeology as a whole.¹⁴ Kathryn Kamp concludes that age categories are cultural constructs that provide basic organisational principles for most societies. She encourages archaeologists to search for the lost children of the past.¹⁵ Joanna Sofaer Derevenski examines the material culture of early childhood from 1600 to 1900. Derevenski explores the relationship between children and the material world, the ways in which material culture of children varies across time and space, and the actions and identities of children in the material record. Her collection spans the Palaeolithic to the late twentieth century and uses data from across Europe, Scandinavia, the Americas and Asia. Sharon Brookshaw examines the issues and problems surrounding the material culture of children and childhood, with the aim of making children more visible within material culture studies. The work presents a case for distinguishing between 'the material culture of children' and 'the material culture of childhood'.¹⁶

Aspects of children's embodiment and materiality in an Irish social-historical culture are also unfortunately omitted from modern discourse. Allison James drew on the notion of embodiment to explore the development of self and the role of embodied experience as part of this.¹⁷ Elisabeth Ellsworth examines 'moving, sensing bodies' and the relationship between people, things and environment.¹⁸ John Horton and Peter Kraftal likewise emphasise the body and embodied experience as being in flux, not a 'bounded thing' but always 'ongoing, never still'.¹⁹ Ann Bartos explored children's sense of place, emotion and space through time.²⁰ Tim Ingold refers to 'zones of entanglements' that shape and are shaped by individuals through a lifetime.²¹ The child doesn't occupy a single location in the lifecycle; rather, body and society are intricately woven together through the life cycle. John Postill and Sarah Pink examine relationships between 'things and processes'.²²

There remains a need for explicit critically historical approaches to the writing of childhood history in Ireland that engage with how children experienced, felt and embodied childhood discourses, and there is also a need to engage in methodologies such as oral history, artefact and visual history. This chapter aims to explore this terrain in Ireland, with a critical historical case study of the Iveagh Trust Play Centre. This case study draws on traditional, rich primary sources but also on material places/spaces and oral history to expose the dominant discourses at play in the formation and performance of childhood: toys, material culture

and various iterations and ideas of play space all influenced how children experienced, felt and embodied childhood in Ireland.

HENRI LEFEBVRE, SPACE AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF CHILDHOOD

Henri Lefebvre [1901–1991] was a French philosopher and sociologist. He produced pioneering work that critiqued everyday life and introduced concepts relating to the production of social space.²³ In this chapter, toys and material culture are read as occupying a specific space that impacts childhood in various ways. Toys and material culture possess individual peculiarity, contour and form. Through play, toys and material culture are transformed and re-arranged in their positions within spatio-temporal configurations. The child's body implicates the space mediated by toy objects and material culture and co-exists with the sentient child body.²⁴ Drawing on a historical spatial lens, this chapter provides glimpses of the complex ways that children's meaning-making unfolded in a Dublin Play Centre. By putting space first as a critical interpretation perspective, this chapter disrupts and brings about new ways of understanding constructions and reconstructions of childhood space in time. On the whole, such analysis has remained under-researched by historians in an Irish context.

CHILDHOOD CONCEIVED

Urban planners, scientists, medical professionals, educators and engineers conceptualised new spaces for children of Ireland during the nineteenth century. What was lived was intricately connected to what was conceived. The urban reality and material conditions of the 'long' nineteenth century justified the design and construction of children's play spaces in urban settings of Dublin, Cork and Belfast. The physical and social fabric of Irish towns and cities changed during the nineteenth century. From 1800, the enfranchised towns and cities of Ireland were growing in size and commercial prosperity. The growth of the city led to an aggravation of the usual urban problems of public health, housing and traffic congestion. Nineteenth-century reports, surveys and valuations exposed the degrading living standards of the working classes within urban cities.²⁵ The Housing and Town Planning Association of Ireland was formed in 1911 for the purpose of educating public opinion on the necessity of securing the future development of Irish cities and with conceiving

suitable open spaces or gardens for workers, where children could have a chance of beginning life under ‘favourable conditions’.²⁶ This new paradigm of town planning drew on scientific knowledge and expertise to consider the body of the child and its relationship with nature, its surroundings and milieu.

Schemes to provide play areas from basic yards to highly developed play centres and outdoor playgrounds had by the 1920s become part of the garden city and town planning movements in Ireland.²⁷ There was the belief that ‘through organised play the elements of civic privileges and obligations can be taught’.²⁸ ‘Childhood conceived’ was born of *savoir* and logic, of maps that reflected the instrumental space of social engineers and planners. It was the space of social reformers, planners, architects and artists with a ‘scientific bent’ that focused on cultivating future children, ideal ‘citizens of value to the state’. The child’s body was moved from the shadows into light. As Sir Robert Meyer noted at the opening of a new children’s playground in Belfast:

There is no doubt that hundreds of little ones under school age have tasted the joys of sand play and obtained the physical benefits of exercise in the open air who previously were either confined in stuffy rooms or were left to sprawl about on doorsteps and in narrow courts and alleys ... there have been several cases of little children attending the sand gardens who have been locked out for the whole day by their parents on going to work in the morning, and have been left to fend for themselves in the streets till the evening ... the [play] grounds became almost too crowded and there was a general improvement in sportsmanship, manners and cleanliness as the season advanced.²⁹

Childhood was identified as a crucial medium through which all children must pass, a provisional stage in the trajectory of being. Childhood was established as natural, social and cultural. Children’s bodies became targets for scientific and ideological practices, representations of space and representational spaces. The perceived, conceived and lived triad combined in practice and space so that the child subject could progress to adult citizenship logically and healthy in body and mind.

Designs for playgrounds and play centres for children were centre stage in philanthropic, town, scientific, medical and educational planning and discourse in Ireland.³⁰ The concept of unwholesome and noxious environments and their effect upon the growth and development of children fuelled the public health, planning and housing debates in Ireland

from mid-nineteenth century. There was extreme condemnation of the street as the child's nursery.³¹ The figure of the child was held up against the backdrop of this virulent urban wasteland. According to English philanthropists, Earl and Countess of Meath:

The usefulness of these institutions [playgrounds] cannot be doubted by anyone who has once seen such grounds crowded with children thoroughly enjoying themselves, and unconsciously strengthening their limbs and constitutions by games and gymnastic exercises performed under the canopy of heaven.³²

By the early twentieth century, the city of Dublin was deemed a slum city, where in 1913 20,108 families out of a total of 25,822 lived in one-roomed tenement houses.³³ According to the *Irish Builder* in 1913, 'outside a few leading streets [Dublin] is in a process of decay'.³⁴ Twentieth-century planning crusades advocating garden city and garden suburb ideals capitalised on the debates surrounding city slums and the vacuum in urban housing initiatives that resulted from the preoccupation of the Irish Parliamentary Party with Home Rule and the 'Ulster Crisis' in the period leading up to 1914.³⁵ The town planning movement established a scientifically grounded discipline of town planning that conceived playgrounds and play centres for children in urban settings. Experts within this movement envisaged the 'great effect in improving the atmosphere of the districts around them, by allowing the change of air so much needed where many human habitations are closely packed together'.³⁶ And ultimately, the experts argued that

If this provision be made for healthful exercises and withdrawal of children from the streets, I think we may expect not only improvement in their bodily health, but also in their conduct and morals.³⁷

Medics, educationalists, church, town planners, architects and philanthropists envisaged play spaces that would cultivate bourgeois notions of cleanliness and behaviour during a liminal stage of personhood, between birth and adulthood. These ideas about the nature and care of children, interwoven with the expert rhetoric of science and biology, expose a culture where children's bodies were targets for design, regulation and normativity: discursive, material and collective processes combined in the construction of childhood.

CHILDHOOD CONCEIVED AT THE DUBLIN PLAY CENTRE

Edward Cecil Guinness, first Earl of Iveagh (1847–1927), founded the Iveagh Trust in April 1890 in emulation of the famous Peabody Trust, England, with a gift of £50,000 under the title of the Guinness Trust (Dublin fund).³⁸ This major philanthropic trust was established to provide housing and related amenities for the labouring poor in London and Dublin. Viscount Iveagh was appointed Chairman of the Trust.³⁹ He obtained powers to acquire Bull Alley area, and to erect buildings on it, at his own expense. Ultimately, in Dublin alone, he spent an amount considerably in excess of the original London and Dublin Trust funds combined. The eventual control and management of the property were vested by an Act of Parliament.⁴⁰ The Iveagh Trust Act of 1903 gave the trustees enlarged powers. The entire property and funds vested in them, from whatever source derived, were administered as one consolidated fund.

Lord Iveagh set up a play centre for working-class children in Francis Street Dublin in 1909. The south inner city of Dublin was a densely packed and long-neglected urban slum by the end of the nineteenth century. Francis Street was located in the built-up area of the south inner city. On a visit to Dublin in 1853, Charles Dickens used the words such as ‘blind alleys’, ‘dirt’, ‘confusion’, ‘shabbiness’ and ‘over-population’ to describe his wander through Francis Street.⁴¹ Francis Street was listed as an area with high morbidity rates in 1893.⁴² Bull Alley was an area of notoriously poor and densely packed housing along narrow alleys and closed courts. The intermixing of slaughterhouses and other ‘obnoxious’ land uses combined to create an extremely unpleasant environment.⁴³

Phased slum clearance led to extensive remodelling of the entire area of Francis Street, Patrick Street and Bull Alley. St. Patrick’s Park was opened in 1897 creating a civilised and hygienic open space.⁴⁴ Bull Alley buildings which incorporated family dwellings and commercial ground floor shops in eight t-shape blocks of five stories and a lodging house for males were erected in 1905.⁴⁵ The Iveagh Baths was added to the philanthropic estate in 1906. Combined, the Iveagh Trust compound represented an antidote to the worst features of urban life and a means of drawing ‘the poorer inhabitants of Dublin’, working-class children and parents into a world of normative rules and regulations. Superintendents working at the Iveagh Trust were instructed in an undated, handwritten memo, ‘some tenants may be very dirty, rough or disagreeable, try

to avoid giving offence and with patient, firmness and tact get them to comply with the rules'.⁴⁶ The Iveagh Trust Dublin colony brought together the refined and refining colonists in a decaying nationalist city. The Iveagh Trust Play Centre was the first play centre of its kind in Dublin and to nationalists represented 'an enclave of Unionist social reform in a decaying Nationalist city'.⁴⁷ Working-class children's bodies were perceived understood and worked upon to produce culturally appropriate behaviours and practices. On 8 July 1911, King George V, accompanied by his wife, Queen Mary, visited the Dublin Play Centre. The children performed pirouettes and sang songs for the royal visit. The Irish child's body was shaped by a range of adult practices and interventions that sought to nourish, protect and fashion them.

By April 1911, Lord Iveagh had informed the Committee that he proposed to erect and equip at his own expense, a much larger and finer play centre building on a site facing St. Patrick's Park in Bull Alley Street.⁴⁸ The play centre for poor children was to be erected on the remaining portion of the land included in the Bull Alley Area Improvement Scheme. The Francis Street Dublin Play Centre was finally closed on the 23 April 1915 to make way for the new, purpose-built Iveagh Trust Play Centre. The new architect-designed Iveagh Trust Play Centre, designed by the Dublin architects McDonnell & Reid, was located at Bull Alley Street.⁴⁹ The structural design and interior layout of the new Iveagh Trust Play Centre were based on play centres in Devons Road and Bow East, London.⁵⁰ It represented a site of contention regarding how children were 'constructed' by unionists and nationalists. For example, English was the only language to be used in the Play Centre. The Superintendent of the Iveagh Trust Play Centre was instructed to 'tactfully inform teachers that they are to avoid writing names in Irish: 'you can blame the office and say we cannot read Irish and therefore do not know who or what the name is'.⁵¹ The use of Irish language was not permitted in a childhood setting that represented a supreme Anglo-Irish machine of disciplinary power designed to alter behaviours, to train and reframe Irish minds and bodies. The Iveagh Trust Play Centre was to provide education with amusement, so that the two wants of children could be catered for.⁵² This was an echo of Karl Friedrich Schinkel's seminal credo on the function and role of museums: first to delight, then to educate. It also, in part, seems to borrow from the concept of the people's palace in Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, a scheme for a culture centre in London's East

End, which the Toynbee Hall, Whitechapel and later, the Mary Ward Settlement in Bloomsbury pioneered.⁵³ Mary Ward founded the Mary Ward Settlement in the 1880s. She had a profound impact on education and was responsible for initiating the play centre movement in England by providing care and activities for children after school and during school vacations. Trainee teachers from the Iveagh Trust Play Centre travelled to the Mary Ward schools on placement.

Operations were transferred from Francis Street to Bull Alley Street on 26 April 1915 at a total cost of £38,000.⁵⁴ Viscount Iveagh brought to a successful conclusion the improvement scheme in the Bull Alley area.⁵⁵ It was proposed that a sum not exceeding £2500 per annum out of the trust income be devoted to the working of the Iveagh Play Centre to cover expenses and provision of refreshment for the children. Lord Iveagh subsequently decided to place an endowment of £10,000 in the name of the Trustees (Fig. 10.1).⁵⁶

The architect-designed Iveagh Trust Play Centre represented a distinctive infant-focused urban place. The design promoted a sense of harmony between the physical building in an urban landscape and the bodies of the children.⁵⁷ Urban planning and scientific design constructed an architectural space for children to inhabit, shielded from passing traffic, a space where the defining discourses of childhood and the defining activities or

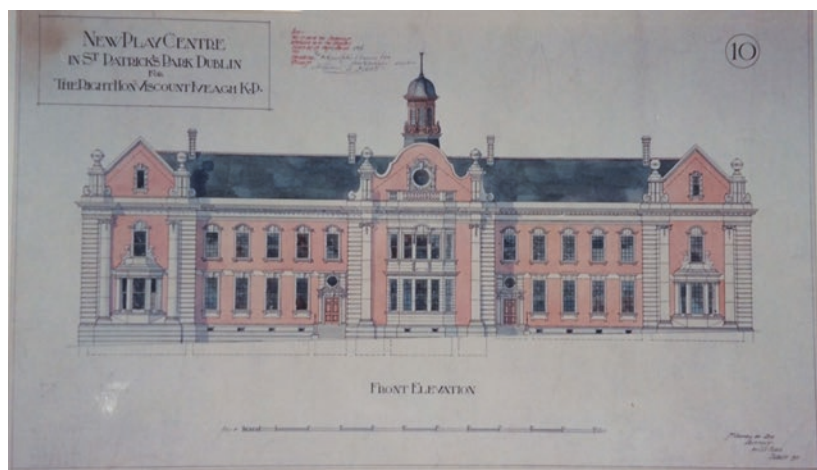


Fig. 10.1 Front elevation, Iveagh Trust Play Centre

rhythms of childhood were scripted. They signified a world apart, a constructed childhood space and a magic grove, with its own logic, objects, rules and timetables that distinguished it from adult reality.⁵⁸ This marks a distinct departure from any planning and design for the Francis Street Play Centre. It echoes new ways of thinking about children's space and the space of childhood. Children's bodies emerged as hybrid entities: they were intricately connected with the built environment, material objects and practices and lived experiences.

The newly designed Iveagh Trust Play Centre physically constructed parameters that guided how children performed childhood. There were eleven classrooms, three large halls for drill and entertainment, a cloakroom and a toilet for the children. There was a large playroom, a gymnasium and a bun room where buns and cocoa were distributed to the children on arrival. In addition, there were rooms for the lady superintendent, teachers and a caretaker's quarters with cloakrooms and lavatories. A professionally designed indoor and outdoor play area was created. The new play centre represented a pedagogical place and space that was very different to all that went before, a new world that children learned to navigate and negotiate.

CHILDHOOD PERCEIVED

'Childhood perceived' refers to the form of space produced through daily routines, activities and rhythms. Rhythms of play may be referred to as the practices of *doing play*. This includes physical and mental activities and the use of toys. Children's lives were structured according to timetables in this newly designed play space. Iveagh Trust teachers designed distinctive timetables and occupations for the children according to gender category and age category (5–7 years, 7–10 years and 10–12 years).⁵⁹ The timetables and occupations framed gender and age identity in the play space according to socially constructed notions of suitable age categories and gender occupations. Pedagogy was expressed through timetables that ascribed homogenised childhood.

There were changes in the material and attitudinal expectations of educational play spaces in the early twentieth century that children would have access to play spaces that satisfied the new essentials of order, purity, light, air and spaciousness. Pedagogy was expressed through the design of child-sized furniture, hand-sized artefacts and colourful learning materials. Manufacturers catered to the demands of the medical

profession and learning movements such as the Iveagh Trust.⁶⁰ Thomas Scott, Furniture Manufacturer, 32–34 Upper Abbey Street, Dublin, supplied infant tables, infant chairs, a blackboard and easels.⁶¹ Clerys and Company, Dublin, equipped the play centre with children's armchairs and work chairs.⁶² Cox and Company, 91 & 101 New Oxford Street, London, supplied outfit boxes of materials for cane work. Philip, Son & Nephew Limited, 89 Paradise Street & 27 Park Lane, London, supplied boxes of paints, crayons, paint brushes and the Kate Greenaway series of children's watercolours. Plasticine was supplied by Harbutt's Plasticine Limited, London.⁶³ Professional interests (engineers, architects, doctors, psychologists, educators and manufacturers) each invoked their expertise in the name of the twentieth-century child: malleable and unfurling.⁶⁴ Interwoven, there was a sense of the malleable child, a child in training and simultaneously children were constructed as unique persons unfolding in physical and material surroundings.

The Dublin Play Centre was officially opened on 15 December 1909 and was used on a daily basis by the children of the area who attended the centre from 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. five evenings a week and from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturday mornings. Spatial rules and prohibitions incited normativity. Expectations to behave in a particular way within the play space were constituted with and through the child's body. A former attendee describes the procedure for entering the Play Centre, 'what happened was ye had to line up going in ... there'd be a porter on the door'.⁶⁵ The porter was responsible for 'get[ting] them [the children] to comply with the rules'.⁶⁶ Adults constructed the appropriate behaviour and there can be no doubt that some bodies conformed whilst other bodies were deemed out of place.

The roll at the Iveagh Trust Play Centre consisted of two hundred children divided into a green group (who attended on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings) and a red group (who attended on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday morning). Children performed childhood as per the timetable. Through activities and interventions chosen by adults, through children's own play practices and through the choice of toys and materials available at the Dublin Play Centre, a particular, gendered ideal of working-class childhood was evoked.

The ideological construction of femininity and masculinity was inscribed in bodies which were male and female through the play centre discourse (timetabling/occupations, allocation of classrooms, furnishing and toys). The patriarchal middle-class ideology espoused at the

Iveagh Trust Play Centre was designed to prepare girls and boys for their future place in twentieth-century Irish society. Girls (five to seven years) played with toys and picture books, fairy stories and signing games, bead-threading and cutting out pictures. Girls (seven to ten years) played with dolls, picture and scrap-making books, clay modelling, fairy stories, musical drill and took part in dancing and singing. And girls (ten to twelve years) were occupied with dolls, dancing, painting, musical drills, doll dressing, knitting and basket work.⁶⁷ In contrast, boys (five to seven years) played with toys and picture books, singing games and fairy stories. Boys (age seven to ten years) played games and took part in musical drill, clay modelling, painting and read fairy stories. Boys (age seven to ten years) were occupied with basket making, gymnastic (jumping, parallel bars), clay modelling, toy-making and games.

On average number of children attending the Centre, whilst its operations were carried out in Francis Street, rose from 133.5 per night in January 1910 to 918.2 per night for the closing week in April 1915.⁶⁸ During the five years and four months of its life, the premises at 100 Francis Street were financed by Lord Iveagh who gave a total of £1378.3.8 for refurbishment costs. In respect of rent, rates and maintenance, he subscribed £497.8.6. Lord Iveagh also contributed a sum of £4217.11.5 for wages and provisions for the children. He bore substantial expenses totalling £6093.3.7 (Fig. 10.2).⁶⁹

Professional expertise (planners, manufacturers, educators, philanthropists) co-conceived the type of childhood space that other professionals (doctors and psychologists) deemed vital for the healthy development of children. The creation and furnishing of this play space devoted to the use of children reflect a macro-cultural trend of the period: of protecting children from real danger and providing adults with reassurance that the boundaries of childhood existed.⁷⁰ Children, on the other hand, negotiated the spaces and used these sites and materials to develop their very own children's culture.

CHILDHOOD LIVED

'Childhood lived' combines the idealised, described and lived experience. Toys, material culture and various iterations and ideas of play space provide a structure for a way of being, for the construction of a unique culture. Yet, whilst the experience of playing was spatially and temporally fixed within the Iveagh Trust Play Centre and linked to ideologies which

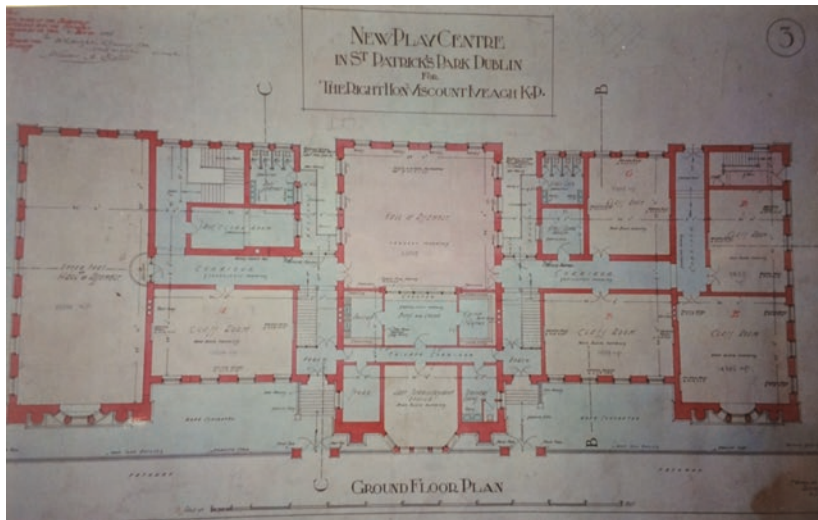


Fig. 10.2 Ground floor plan, Iveagh Trust Play Centre. *Source* Iveagh Trust records, Bull Alley, Dublin

interpreted play as a means of anticipating adult role and frameworks for behaviours, there can be no doubt that children exerted spatial agency and enacted many *selves* through play (princess, teacher, mummy, daddy). One such child, *Mimi*, described the lived experience of the Dublin Play Centre for her:

I learned an awful lot from the Bay no ... (Myra Hall in Francis Street). I was in the embroidery class ... the knitting class, there was a library and basket-making and there was dancing and singing. In the Babies Room there were toys ... we loved an excuse to go to the babies room ... I would tell [my baby sister to ask for me] when I moved on ... the first play we put on was Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs ... come Christmas ... there were treats and toys under the Christmas trees and Lady Guinness used to visit us ... we had a special song for Lady Guinness ... At the Iveagh Ground fetes ... there was egg and spoon races, May poles, sack races ... we really had a good time ... kids played down there ... there were different types of games ... we had skipping ropes, spinning tops.⁷¹

The lived space produced by Mimi was embodied. Her agency is visible. Mimi produced a narrative and action that transverse the rules, 'I would

tell my baby sister to ask for me so that I could go back to the baby room'. She exercised agency over the actions she chose her body to perform. And whilst the spatiality of power in the child–adult relationships at the Play Centre structured childhood from without, it did not prevent the experiencing of childhood, from within.

The Iveagh Trust Play Centre was a space that was designed to fit into the existing pattern of working-class life. Children were not removed from their neighbourhood; rather, the play centre became an extension of family and neighbourhood. Superintendents of the Dublin Play Centre are informed in a written memo: 'never strike a child but point out to the parents that they must control their children'.⁷² This twentieth-century trend of establishing protective, civilising havens for working-class children within cities was also evident in the outdoor playground movements of Cork, Belfast and Dublin.⁷³ Superintendents of the Dublin Play Centre are told that, 'for the first week or so, children will be very troublesome and mischievous and will require constant watching over to keep them from doing harm ... but with firmness and patience they will soon learn to behave'.⁷⁴ Through activities and the use of material and symbolic boundaries, expressed and actual behavioural expectations were achieved. Children contested the extent of their agency. They were active agents, actively involved in the construction of their social and cultural worlds.⁷⁵

Materials, bodies and embodiments were all involved in the construction of the play centre and were intricately interwoven with ideas and ideals of childhood in twentieth-century society.⁷⁶ On the one hand, there was a sense of the malleable child, a child in training for citizenship, and on the other hand, there was the simultaneous construction of children as unique persons unfolding in physical, material and magical surroundings. Children themselves occupied the play space and crossed into the world of the imaginary, giving it a certain structure. They used their bodies (heads, hands, organs and gestures) as agents in the construction of childhood, shaping as well as being shaped. Children's agency was facilitated via the interconnections between materials, spaces, places and bodies.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a historical study of the material culture of the Iveagh Trust Play Centre. Children's toys, material culture and various iterations and ideas of play space are taken 'out of the shadows' into the

light. They are ‘decrypted’.⁷⁷ This invariably exposes the body of the child and presupposes the use of the child’s body. It confirms the relationship of space and body as (1) perceived: through the use of hands, members and sensory organs, through gestures of work as activity and through the heart; (2) conceived: via ideology, knowledge of anatomy, physiology, sickness and cure, and through the body’s relationship with nature; and (3) lived: through the heart, the feeling, the emotion, the passion and the action.⁷⁸ The triad of childhood in spatial terms loses all force if it is treated as an abstract model. The process is intricately interwoven with the body of the child. This historical case study of the Iveagh Trust exposes the construction and reconstruction of childhood in Ireland. The play centre represented a childhood space as lived through its associated toys and material culture and provides a context from which to expose concepts and beliefs, identities and behavioural enactments that crucially influenced, enabled and constrained conceptions, representations, relationships and actualities of childhood in Ireland in the early twentieth century.⁷⁹

NOTES

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3. James, Jenks, and Prout, *Theorizing Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Iona Opie and Peter Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959); Elizabeth Goodenough, 'Introduction to Special Issue on the Secret Spaces of Childhood', *Michigan Quarterly Review* 29, no. 2 (2000): 180.
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7. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998).
8. Refers to the modes through which a person knows and constructs reality, Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 8.
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10. Lloyd de Mause, *The History of Childhood* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).
11. Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (New York: Longman, 1995); see also, Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York, 1985). Linda Pollock critiques Stone's work as methodologically questionable.
12. Allison James and Alan Prout, eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London: Falmer, 1997); Allison James, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout, *Theorizing Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).
13. Thomas J. Schlereth, 'The Material Culture of Childhood: Problems and Potential in Historical Explanation', *Material History Bulletin* 21 (1985): 1–14; Patricia N. Schoonmaker, *Collector's History of the Teddy Bear* (Riverdale, MD: Hobby House, 1981); and Peter Kraftl and Peter Adey, 'Architecture/Affect/Inhabitation: Geographies of Being-In Buildings', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, no. 1 (2008): 213–231.
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26. *Housing and Town Planning Association of Ireland* (1912), 9.
27. The Civics Institute of Ireland, *The Dublin Civic Survey* (Liverpool, 1925).

28. The Civics Institute of Ireland, *The Playgrounds* (1912).
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30. Vanessa Rutherford, 'Muscles and Morals: Children's Playground Culture in Ireland in the Long Nineteenth Century', in *Leisure and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Leeann Lane and William Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).
31. J.F. McMullen, 'Cork Health and Housing Exhibition', *Reports of the HTPAI* (1912), 49.
32. The Earl and the Countess of Meath, *Thoughts on Imperial and Social Subjects* (London, 1906), 'Public Playgrounds for Children', August 1893, 122.
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34. *The Irish Builder*, October 25, 1913.
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36. J. Thomason, 'On Public Parks in Connection with Large Towns, with the Suggestion for the Formation of a Park at Belfast', in *Belfast Social Inquiry Society* (Belfast, 1852), 3.
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38. Cecil Guinness set up a Housing Trust in 1890 (Iveagh Trust 1903) based on the model by American banker George Peabody (*Peabody Trust*, 1862) in London. The Guinness Trust provided 586 dwellings in total; 250 flats of between one and three rooms; in three five-storey blocks at Bull Alley; and later, lodging house, public baths and recreation centre added. Guinness also involved in DADC dwellings in inner city Dublin.
39. *The first annual report of the Iveagh Trust* for the year ending 31 December 1903, Iveagh Trust records.
40. *The thirteenth annual report of the Iveagh Trust* for the year ending 31 December 1915, Iveagh Trust records, Bull Alley, Dublin.
41. Jim Cooke, 'Charles Dickens: A Dublin Chronicler', *Dublin Historical Record* 42, no. 3 (1989): 97–98.
42. F.H.A. Aalen, *The Iveagh Trust: The First One Hundred Years, 1890–1900* (Dublin, 1990).
43. Ibid.
44. 'Byelaws for the use, control and management of St. Patrick's Park, Dublin, Act', 1897, 60 and 61 Vic., cap. 16.

45. General rules and conditions of occupation, The Guinness Trust Buildings, Instructions for superintendents; Aalen, *The Iveagh Trust* (Dublin, 1990).
46. Instructions for superintendents, office copy (n/d, Iveagh Trust records).
47. Fraser, *John Bull's Other Homes*, 71.
48. Play Centre Committee Minutes, April 27, 1911, Iveagh Trust records.
49. Myra Hall subsequently became the Legion of Mary Hall. Following on the foundation of the Dublin Sanitary Association (1872), Sir Arthur Guinness and others of the Unionist business elite in Dublin initiated considerable urban housing reform. According to Guinness, 'The commercial principle must be upheld and to succeed it must be made to pay' in Fraser, *John Bull's Other Homes*, 71.
50. William S. Petterson, *Victorian Heretic* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976); Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphrey Ward* (London, 1923). Mary Humphrey Ward and the Passmore Settlement. The Passmore Settlement, Tavistock Place, London [1897] for the children of St. Pancras and additional play centres established by Mrs Humphrey Ward were extremely significant examples for the development of the Iveagh Trust play centre. Passmore Settlement opened after school hours and at weekends for children of the poorer districts of St. Pancras and King's Cross. William S. Petterson, *Victorian Heretic: Mrs Humphrey Ward's Robert Elsmere* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976); J.P. Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphrey Ward* (London, 1923).
51. J.A. Bonner to Miss Gough, February 17, 1922, Iveagh Trust records.
52. Ibid.
53. Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men: An Impossible Story* (London, 1882).
54. Letter from J.A. Bonner to Lt. Col. G.W. Addison, 5 Grosvenor Place, London, 28 April 1915 re. The Iveagh Play Centre, Iveagh Trust records.
55. As provided for in the 'Dublin Improvement Bull Alley Area Act' 1899, 62 Vict. cap 2 and as amended by the 'Iveagh Trust Act', 1903, 3 Edwd., 7, cap. 3.
56. Trustees Minutes, July 2, 1915.
57. Christopher Day, *Places of the Soul: Architecture and Environmental Design as a Healing Art* (The Aquarian Press: Wellingborough, 1990).
58. Ibid.
59. Letter, March 19, 1920, Iveagh Trust records.
60. 'Infant desks and chairs have been devised to support the hollow of the lower back...' R.B. McVittie, *Education from a Physiological Point of View* (Dublin, 1907), 20.
61. November 4, 1909, Iveagh Trust records.
62. November 7, 1909, Iveagh Trust records.

63. Invoice, 1909, Iveagh Trust records.
64. Vanessa Rutherford, 'The Panopticon: St. Ultan's Infant Hospital, Dublin 1918', in *Ordinary and Outcast: Poor Women, Family and Sexuality in Ireland, 1840–1950*, eds. Cara Delay and Christine Brophy (New York: Palgrave, 2015).
65. Interview with an attendee (b.1907), 19 October 2000; Trustees under the will of Alfred Henshaw, deceased, with the Rgt. Hon. Edward Cecil Baron Iveagh, K.P., Agreement, 10 December 1902. The Right Honourable Edward Cecil Baron Iveagh, K.P. agreed to purchase the lands, dwelling houses, yards, offices and premises of 26 and 27 Francis Street, in the parish of Saint Nicholas, Co Dublin on 18 December 1902 for £750; Christopher Day, *Places of the Soul: Architecture and Environmental Design as a Healing Art* (The Aquarian Press: Wellingborough, 1990).
66. Instructions for superintendents, office copy (n/d), Iveagh Trust records.
67. Kate Greenaway series of children's watercolours were provided.
68. Committee Minutes, St. James's Gate, Dublin, July 2, 1915.
69. Ibid.
70. Rutherford, 'Muscles and Morals'.
71. Interview with Play Centre Attendee, October 19, 2000. *Pseudo name*, Mimi (b.1907).
72. Instructions for superintendents, office copy (n/d, Iveagh Trust records), 22.
73. Rutherford, 'Muscles and Morals'.
74. Instructions for superintendents, office copy (n/d, Iveagh Trust records), 22.
75. Vanessa Rutherford, 'Nostalgic Panoramas of Childhood: Toys Objects in Ireland 1851–1909', in *Reinventing Childhood Nostalgia: Books, Toys and Contemporary Media Culture*, ed. Elisabeth Wesseling (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2018).
76. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 79.
77. Ibid., 39.
78. Ibid., 42.
79. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*.



CHAPTER 11

‘Set Up Before the People’: Images and Ideals of Boys’ Clothing in Ireland, c.1910–1940

Hilary O’Kelly

The stuff they got for my suit was blue serge, and that was not so bad. They got as far as the pants, and that passed off very civil. You can’t do much to a boy’s pants, one pair is like the next, though I had to ask them not to trouble themselves putting three little buttons on either side of the legs. The waistcoat was all right, and anyway the coat would cover it. The coat itself, that was where Aughrim was lost.

The lapels were little wee things, like what you’d see in pictures like Ring magazine of John L. Sullivan, or Gentleman Jim, and the buttons were the size of saucers, or within the bawl of an ass of it, and I nearly cried when I saw them being put on, and ran down to my mother, and begged her to get me any sort of a suit, even a jersey and pants, than have me set up before the people in this get-up.¹

‘The Confirmation Suit’, Brendan Behan (1923–1964)

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Brendan Behan's piercing evocation of childhood sensitivity catches the politics of dress more intensely than any purely historical account. Acutely attuned to the potential for private agony that is inseparable from social comedy, it pinpoints how the child was all too often a hostage to the constructions of its elders. At the same time, it is a perceptive document of the functioning of dress within a social system, its detail ranging from the nuanced hierarchies of materials to the centrality of printed media as a common source for authority, of endorsement or derision.

Dress, just as much as language, education or prayer, was a crucial vehicle for inculcating the ideologies of dominant power in Ireland in the period before and after independence. Long discounted as inherently superficial, clothing has more recently come to be understood as a key site of discourse for power relations of gender, age and status; social, cultural, political and national. Dress itself is constructed with needle and thread. Its wider meaning is also constructed, and dress as worn, understood and represented relies on context, word and image. The combination of narrative, picture and text gave children's illustrated literature a compelling allure, both for children and for those seeking to mould them to a particular image. The aim of this essay is to examine how such illustrated literature for boys was an integral part of the apparatus of institutional, state and commercial visions of how youth should be formed visually, mentally and materially, in Ireland around the early independence years. Building on the timeless objective of 'mingling instruction with delight', a leading magazine, *Our Boys*, thus set out to shape the male youth of Ireland with tales of adventure, heroism and discovery.

Our Boys was founded by the Christian Brothers in 1914 to develop what Michael Flanagan characterises as the image of an Irish heroic archetype that held the central tenets of Irish nationalism—faith and fatherland—as its highest ideal. In his authoritative studies,² Flanagan outlines the nature and readership of this highly successful publishing enterprise which at one stage of its long existence outsold all other magazines combined in the country, becoming a veritable institution of Irish boyhood. From the outset, the paper achieved a circulation of 30,000–40,000, suggesting a readership of perhaps 100,000, a reach supported by the network of Christian Brothers' schools. Established across Ireland, the Brothers' success lay in a pragmatic recognition of the need to balance faith and fatherland with commerce and social advancement. While the founding mission of the order was:

to attend to the educational needs of the poor, ...[in fact] many middle-class Catholic boys were sent to be educated by the Brothers with the promise of a secure position within the civil service, banks or insurance companies... The emphasis on employment meant that, no matter how nationalist in tone their textbooks [also published by the order], the Brothers had an allegiance to... examinations and results.³

As part of their agenda of social mobility through education, the Brothers also published *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth*, a handbook of manners, running to many editions over almost a hundred years. Elucidating imperatives of social decorum, behaviour, address and dress, the detailed rules outlined gave

an intolerably mincing, and probably out-of-date impression of daily life. Yet they were taken extremely seriously. The Church long maintained an interest in personal manners, both as part of its general campaign of civilising the Irish... and in the interests of creating leaders in local communities.⁴

While the ideal of the order was to form Catholic-nationalist, heroic men to lead the nation, their immediate influence was on boys and youth, who from early childhood they sought to mould in an image combining Christ and Cúchulainn. Their publications, however, reveal how such visionary goals had to begin with the young, in the intimate domestic sphere:

Children when old enough to dress themselves should not be permitted assistance. It is an important part of their training that they should be taught to dress themselves neatly and becomingly without depending on others... It is an impropriety to appear before any one unless completely and modestly attired.

Rules on this subject would be quite unnecessary if persons were only attentive to the dictates of propriety. Too much liberty it would seem is sometimes permitted in this matter, and yet reason and religion tell us that all should be done in order and with the strictest decorum.⁵

At this time in 1921, 24,000 pupils were receiving an education with the order, for almost all of whom it would have been a substantial familial stretch to achieve the standard of 'neat', 'becoming', 'complete' and 'modest' dress presented in *Our Boys* or *Christian Politeness*.

That is, of course, even with any agreement on how such qualities could actually translate into material form; the dress-maker's choice of button for Brendan Behan's suit was clearly an abomination to the Confirmation candidate himself.

Dress conveys immediately, without words, the ideas and ideals of personal and group identity. Though worn by individuals, its forms and agendas are shaped by society. In Ireland, in the independence years, dress was a critical tool in conveying aspirations for a new nation—as part of the modern world, but also separate. Political and popular culture drew on the ancient past to proclaim difference, while at the same time aimed, by reinforcing contemporary norms, to claim credentials for participation in world affairs. In this irreconcilable discourse, ancient Irish dress was disadvantaged through a haziness around both its historical form and its current role, especially when set against the intense clarity of modern idioms of attire. But in fact neither 'ideal' represented the reality of most boys' experience. Cost aside, ancient Irish dress (tunic and cloak) was too 'other' for most households trying to assert their standing in a close community. At the same time, the smart, fitted suit, white linen and polished shoes were generally beyond the circumstances of households hard pressed to keep children fed and healthy—or even fed and shod at all.

In the years leading up to 1916, the Irish-Ireland movement widely promoted a role for ancient Irish or 'national dress', particularly for children, though few advocated it as any sort of everyday wear. There was not even consensus on whether it might serve as theatrical, ceremonial or military dress, or as uniform. The clothing actually worn by the majority of urban Irish children was mainstream European dress in varying degrees of quality, quantity, fit, finish and cleanliness; its Irishness, if present at all, mainly confined to materials or manufacture. As dress internationally grew increasingly similar in the early twentieth century, *Our Boys* was not alone in Ireland in trying to forge, within this transnational idiom, a distinctive message of Gaelic, Catholic virtue. Real local difference was achieved, however, more through language and ornament, than by anything inherently Celtic or Catholic in the dress itself. Notwithstanding the Rising and the achievement of the Free State, the growing influence of modernity saw Irish myths and sagas challenged by cinematic ideals of heroism—though it did remain possible to link the athletic prowess of Cúchulainn, Fionn and the Fianna with an international agenda of health and exercise.

Through a sample of images, texts and advertisements, besides a comparative analysis of the contemporary photographic record, it is possible to highlight the degree of construction and instruction embedded through dress in the Ireland of *Our Boys*, if not indeed other publications. Even a small selection of images and text shows how adult agendas of politics, class, religion, gender, history, modernity and Irish Revival were directly projected into the realm of children's formation.⁶ Something of this ethos behind *Our Boys* can be seen in the explicit linking of the progress of youth and the development of the nation in a 1921 section of *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth* entitled 'Self-Improvement':

Self-improvement is the basis of all progress. In proportion as individuals apply themselves to the work of their improvement, so will families, and cities and states advance ...

Next perhaps to the satisfaction of the soul comes the cultivation of the manners. ... it is our duty to study the manners of good society ... for it is hardly possible to succeed in life without attention to etiquette. ... To use a homely phrase, no fish out of water is more uncomfortable than a rustic in an assembly of the polite. "Manners make the man." They distinguish the gentleman from the clown; they constitute one of the leading differences between a life of civilization and a life of barbarism.⁷

This chapter focuses on themes of national identity, modernity and social status aiming to explore how many battles over culture that figured in public discourse of the period were embodied in aspirations for boy's dress, the more so when nuances of the clothing are drawn out.

NATIONAL COSTUME

In some instances, sensitivity to nuance is not required, with dress introduced as direct, bald symbol. An early, foundational, story in *Our Boys* (November 1914) 'The Captain's Son' strives to illuminate the tectonic differences between the true cultures of Ireland and Britain, blurred by the similarities of language and dress that only mask their deep differences of spirit. The hero of the tale is Turlough O'Brien, son of an officer in Queen Victoria's army now retired to his Irish estate. Aged fourteen, Turlough (Fig. 11.1) is 'sent, much against his will to an English boarding school' where he is 'treated with a kind of good-natured contempt by those superior young gentlemen'.

THE CAPTAIN'S SON.

me was Turlough O'Brien. He her to Millicent O'Brien, "the daughter," mentioned in the sa of the celebrated ballad. His s not captain of the yeos, but of y regiment in the reign of Queen retired and living upon his Irish besides, they were mere moon-not "brave united men" at all; at least, but they learned better arwards. h did not talk patriotism, and ot suspected in his loyal home would have vexed his soldier who, though a thorough-going in his fashion, a hater of English e, and a lover of his native land os to live in, yet cherished a loyalty to the sovereign lady in my he had served.

English School.

fourteenth year Turlough was th against his will, to an English school ruled over by a staff of who were not only "English," looked upon Ireland as a place th considering. The boarders eir teachers' sentiments to the from the first day that Turlough ne school he was looked upon as ss of a curiosity, and was treated nd of good-natured contempt by erior young gentlemen. There however, who showed a kindly n him, Dr. Houston, the Princ- ie school. He had spent some n Ireland and knew something ndition and history of the Irish

oks which were used in this school cially the histories which were e, were not at all to Turlough's ay by day he was compelled to it "the Empire upon which the e sets," English kings, English glish statesmen, English soldiers, e a reference to Ireland nor to y of her sons, nor to the blood y shed side by side with British n many a hard-fought field. In and was looked upon as a place to go to, a place only partly full of crime and wickedness of ad. And when, among the themselves, the name of an Irish- mentioned, it was for the pur- making a vulgar joke at his

s was galling to Turlough's nd a war of words frequently but he was able to hold his sometimes more, against them e was only one who seemed a ar him.

Notwithstanding these battles that oc- curred from time to time, Turlough gradually became a favourite among his companions. One night, after the boys had retired to their dormitory, and just as they were all comfortably tucked in, he began telling them stories—such wild, wonderful stories they had never heard in their lives. He summoned to his aid ban- shees, sheogues, pookas, and leprechauns—all the fairy and phantom troops of his native southern hills. They shivered, one and all, and covered their heads with the blankets. By-and-by, when he thought



they were getting sleepy, he arose to arouse them. It was a wet towel he used.

Fig. 11.1 Turlough O'Brien, 'The Captain's Son', in the attire of an English 'Public' School, *Our Boys*, November 1914. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Slowly, his own innate nobility converts his peers towards admiration, helped by his stirring tales from Irish history and lore. But he has not yet proclaimed his true allegiance, at school or at home:

He did not talk patriotism, and it was not suspected in his loyal home circle. It would have vexed his soldier father, who a thorough-going Irishman in his fashion, a hater of English society life, and a lover of his native land as a place to live in, yet cherished a chivalrous loyalty to the sovereign lady in whose army he had served.⁸

The assertion of difference developed through the story comes to a head with prize day at the end of the school year, when a select coterie of four boys, including Turlough and his arch-rival, George Augustus Trevelyan, is entered for the elocution prize. 'The poem selected for the occasion was... "Ye Mariners of England", a piece against which Turlough's 'national inclination rebelled'. On the appointed day, the spacious hall fills with parents, 'rich merchants, lawyers, doctors and colonels'. George Trevelyan coming onto the stage 'dressed in a most elegant fashion' delivers a wonderful interpretation, in 'silvery tones', convincing everyone Turlough has 'met his Waterloo'. Especially given that when he is called to recite, he fails to appear:

No 4. 'Master Turlough O'Brien' Another painful pause. At last the door of the dressing room opened and out walked Turlough with slow and graceful step, his head thrown slightly back and took his stand near the edge of the platform. A fine beautifully proportioned boy with a countenance strikingly handsome and intellectual, and eyes large and luminous, the audience looked upon him with surprise and admiration. He was dressed in ancient Irish costume – saffron kilt, finely ... ornamented on the breast Caught at the shoulder by a magnificent Irish brooch and falling gracefully.... As he stood there erect and dignified he looked every inch the son of an Irish king...

Turlough bowed and began

Thrice at the huts of Fontenoy the English column failed...

His rendition of the Thomas Davis poem is a triumph, and 'with a few superb gestures, and with his large eyes flashing fire... He held complete control over every man, woman and child in that hall. They feared his power'.⁹

In both word and image, the narrative projects the dream of Ireland reclaiming its own voice, unshackled from deference to English norms and authority; Turlough's exile to an English school is emblematic of an older generation's misguided loyalty to the coloniser. Turning the pages, a youthful reader could cheer to see Turlough transformed from rigid, constrained lackey, pinioned in a straitjacket of conformity, to an expressive, poetic hero-figure, surging past the Union Jack (Fig. 11.2) proudly to declaim his own culture.

Though rarely presented with such binary clarity, the alternate guises of Turlough O'Brien communicate the power of dress to express or dissemble the self. But also—in relation to children—they vividly betray the potential of dress as a tool with which to control and direct childhood aspiration by authorities, ranging from the parental to the institutional.

Less clarity prevailed, however, around the form and design of ancient Irish dress and translating it into the present. Although the text describes a saffron 'kilt', the illustration represents a tunic and cloak, that is, the *brat* and *léine*, outlawed under Henry VIII to suppress a distinct Irish identity. In the years before 1916, some within the nationalist movement had sought to restore this lost form of 'authentic' dress, succeeding—like Turlough, however—only in a theatrical rather than an everyday context. For daily life, 'national dress' had been recast during the same period as a more formal, and palatable, kilt and cloak. In this incarnation, it had acquired an authority of Celtic masculinity, reinforced through its adoption by *Na Fianna Éireann*, the Irish Boy Scout movement established in 1909 by Bulmer Hobson and Constance Markievicz. However, even among this patriotic, virile group, the outfit must have lacked universal appeal, as the *Fianna Handbook* concedes:

There are two Fianna uniforms, either of which can be selected by a sluagh [troop], but all the boys in one sluagh should have the same. The uniforms of the Fianna are: Green slouch hat, olive green shirt (double-breasted, brass buttons, no pockets on outside of shirt, shoulder straps); dark breeches and puttees or kilts with saffron "brat" caught at left shoulder with brooch. With the kilt jerseys of a dark green colour may be worn instead of the shirt.¹⁰

In *brat*, brooch and in kilt, rather than in more historical and theatrical tunic, the boy scouts emulated Fionn and the Fianna, as well as the band of youths lead by Setanta, the childhood name of Cúchulainn, described in *Our Boys* as



Fig. 11.2 Turlough O'Brien, 'The Captain's Son' in ancient Irish costume, *Our Boys*, November 1914. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

sons of chiefs and nobles, whom King Conor had assembled at his palace of Emania:

boys all aglow with exhilarating exercise; their long hair floating in the breeze, bound around the temples with bright coloured bands of silk on which were strung cup-shaped ornaments of gold; their varied-hued tunics, as huddled together they now defended their goal... all formed a picture of such brilliant colouring, so instinct with life in its most joyous expression, that Setanta stood rooted to the spot with wonder and delight.¹¹

Such a winning image of Celtic boyhood clearly aimed to appeal to readers of *Our Boys*, introduced to support what Michael Flanagan describes as 'nationalist Ireland's desire to establish a distinctive national character, as different as possible from that of its former ruler'.¹² Emblazoned on the cover of the first issue is a Papal blessing for the magazine's aims, while above this, dressed in Irish uncial script, the title *Our Boys* swims in Celtic interlace decoration. In striking contrast to this assertion of ancient lineage, a wholly modern idiom marks the drawing of three male youths, although contained within a circle containing a quasi-gothic trefoil and shamrocks, redolent of Saint Patrick and the Trinity (Fig. 11.3).

Dark and glossy haired, the two older boys read to the youngest. Though seemingly an inconsequential decorative motif, the drawing—maintained through years of subsequent editions—represents in concentrated form ideas fleshed out in the magazine's content, in advertisement, images, stories and editorial. Seen together, the trio can be understood as a construction of the normative progress of a boy through the three ages of youth.

RESPECTABILITY

In marked contrast to the colourful, unfettered and youthful vigour of the Cúchulainn stories featured in *Our Boys*, the two elder boys in the masthead image are trimly suited in dark tailored wool and starched linen. Since at least the sixteenth century, such tailoring had been established as a key signifier of masculine authority, and white starched linen almost a litmus test of cleanliness, respectable status and social inclusion. It is no coincidence that publications of the era abound in advertisements for nationwide laundry services. Thus, the boys' attire not only

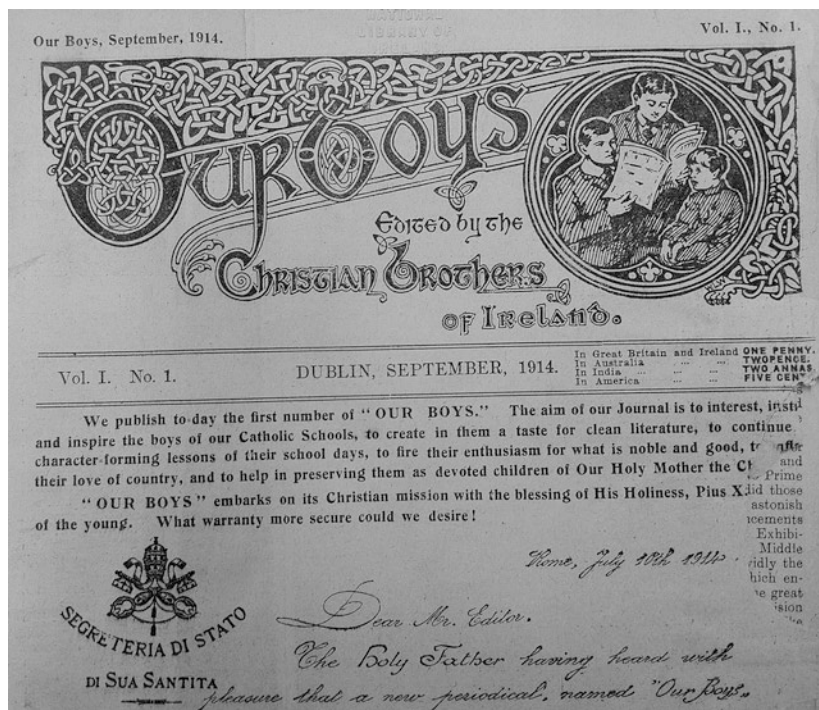


Fig. 11.3 Mast Head, *Our Boys*, 1914 (and continuing to c.1918). Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

presents the appearance of impeccable civility, but in its constricting cut and its firm, ungiving construction actually regulates bodily movement to within a 'civil' range. The names given to male suits in Ireland reveal the extent to which norms of gentlemanly behaviour were culturally constructed as emanating from England. Advertised in *Our Boys*, the 'London' suit was in fact manufactured in Cornmarket Dublin, while 'Rugby' and 'Eton' suits were on offer by McBirney & Co. of Aston Quay, Dublin.¹³

From about his mid-teens, it was expected that a boy's aspirations and behaviour should be shaped by the forces of education, religion and society, to emulate those of his father. Hence, the eldest boy, in the centre, wears a collar and tie, cut just like a man's, to inscribe adult behaviour.

But relinquishing the physical and sartorial liberty of childhood started earlier, and in a graduated process. Between the ages of about 7 and 10, boys were expected to begin to 'shape up' and to this end were dressed in a 'Norfolk' jacket, of the sort worn in the image above by the middle boy (Fig. 11.3, left). This was a single-breasted, box-pleated garment with a half-belt sewn in at the back (visible in Fig. 11.4). Designed originally as an adult shooting jacket, it had inverted pleats at the shoulder to allow freer arm movement for country pursuits.

Halfway between gentlemanly tailoring and 'county' activities, this cut and style resulted in the popular adoption of the 'Norfolk' suit for the schoolboy, an adult man in training. Meanwhile, his continued youth was denoted through wearing of the 'Eton' collar. This broad white, starched neckwear was always worn outside the suit collar and lapel, as is clear in its depiction in *Our Boys*. Though the London and Rugby styles were available into adult sizes, the Eton was restricted to younger ages, hence the 'Eton collar' coming to visually denote the schoolboy.

NOVEMBER, 1914. OUR BOYS.

OUR BOYS' EDITOR

"OUR BOYS" by post for one year:
In Ireland and Great Britain, 2/-.
in America, 50 cents.

Literary contributions to be addressed to—
The Editor, "Our Boys,"
St. Mary's, Marino, Dublin.

Business communications to—
The Manager, "Our Boys,"
65 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin.

Contributions for publication should be written on one side only of the paper. Drawings should be made about one-fourth larger than they are intended to appear in "Our Boys."

sinn féin.
Appreciations continue to pour in upon us; but don't fear, we shall publish only a few of them.

in Durham and Northumberland, when I hope to send you an order for some hundreds."

From many convent schools in England and Ireland warm appreciations

attractive
More th
coloured
we cater
useless a
for their
poetry, v
ing all th
"Our B
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mean le
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Melleray
whose te

Fig. 11.4 Editor's Page, *Our Boys*, 1914, including two of the boys from the front-page masthead image. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Again, more than an incidental sartorial whim, the Eton collar is congruent with institutional aspirations for the moulding of boys in values of uprightness and self-control. Introduced to boys' dress around the 1870s, it finds a parallel in the contemporary edition of *Christian Politeness*, which stressed the correct deportment of 'The Head'. 'The head should be held erect; it should not be turned giddily from side to side. In conversation we should pay attention to its motion' (1875).¹⁴ The Brothers' moral imperative is given material form in the stiff collar reaching high on the neck, regulating head movement, while recording any laxity or infraction on its gleaming white surface. *Christian Politeness* advised equally that 'Nothing contributes more to exterior dignity and propriety of manners than exactness in preserving the natural position of the body'.¹⁵ Here, the natural order of the body itself is coercively refigured to conform with Christian, middle-class constructions of respectability. As the head leads, the body follows its proper movements and upstanding posture encouraged by a close-fitting suit.

This instructive alignment of manners, deportment and Christian virtue emanates not only from Christian Brothers sources, but more widely. A similar theme of bodily decorum is framed in a more socially inclusive way by the poet Katharine Tynan in *A Little Book of Manners*.¹⁶ While emphasising the importance of 'gentle' manners, she underscores that these are not a factor of wealth or social advantage:

We who are his followers should try to follow [Our Lord] in His gentleness. Gentlemen, gentry, gentlehood, all have the same derivation. The words have nothing to do with accidents of riches, rank or birth. The barefoot boy can be, and very often is, in this Ireland of ours, a gentleman.¹⁷

Against this, however, and at variance with the widespread reality of barefoot children, it is the suited and well-shod boy who is presented in children's publications as the ideal of Irish boyhood. Barefoot children remained prevalent in Ireland, indeed not uncommon, well into the 1950s, regularly evident in the photographic record but rare in children's literature. Even when specifically so described in a text, the accompanying illustration, in its cleverly contrived ambiguity, betrays a deep reservation against visually enfranchising the barefooted.¹⁸ Above the lines

Children with bare feet upon the sands,
 Of some ebb'd sea, or playing on the streets
 Of little towns in Connacht—Pearse (*The Wayfarer*)

a drawing for the early life of Padraic Pearse effectively occludes the child's feet, cutting off one below the ankle and masking the other behind Pearse's leg, whose cast shadow suggests a decent long stocking dressing the boy. Against Pearse's shining leather shoe, the contrast might have been too much (Fig. 11.5).

The normative projection of a well-shod youth is driven home in the continual front-page advertising in *Our Boys* in the 1920s and 1930s for 'Science Polishes & Science Creams' manufactured by Punch & Co., Cork (Fig. 11.10, centre).

Even if its readership reached across classes (as did the student intake for the Christian Brothers), *Our Boys* determinedly presented as normative the middle-class experience, from dress, to morals to outlook. Its disinclination to picture the vulgar realities of the everyday mirrors the genteel restraint of *Christian Politeness* that restricted descriptions of dirt or 'soiling' to the benign:

It is important to attend to neatness in dress. Our clothes should be thoroughly brushed, not showing here and there bits of wool or traces of yesterday's mud; shirt-front, collar, cuffs, &c., should be spotless; our boots by being well polished must be in keeping with the rest of our attire.¹⁹

Shoes and boots, next to overcoats, were the most expensive item of dress, and though offered widely for sale second hand were nonetheless still beyond the reach of many. In *Dublin Tenement Life* Kevin C. Kearns records:

Men and women ordinarily had a respectable second-hand outfit for Sunday Mass. Children, however, were "all raggedy", recalls Peggy Pigott [a teacher at Rutland Street school for forty years], "shoes very bad and they cut a Player's Cigarette box and put that on the soles." Many children had no shoes at all and ran barefoot through the rough cobblestoned streets during the dead of winter... The principal source of clothing for the poor were the second-hand markets such as Cole's Lane, Cumberland Street, and the Daisy and Iveagh markets. The clothing, heaped in mounds up to six feet high, were mostly brought in by tuggers.²⁰



Fig. 11.5 Illustration of Padraic Pearse and a young boy, *Clarion Reader, Junior*, 1934. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

On the other hand, middle-class expectations did fairly represent the reality of life for some children. And this social and sartorial gulf is well outlined by comparison of the barefoot boy of the photographic record with the documentary evidence of the boys' outfit stipulated for attendance at Patrick Pearse's St. Enda's School:

Each Boarder should come provided with at least two suits of clothes, of which one should be dark in colour; one overcoat or hooded cape; three flannel day shirts; a dozen collars; six pairs of socks or stockings; two pairs of walking boots or shoes; one pair of football boots; one pair of house

shoes; a dozen pocket handkerchiefs; three flannel sleeping suits; two bolster cases; two pillow cases; two pairs of sheets; comb, hair-brush, tooth-brush, nail-brush, two toilet towels, one bath towel, knife, fork, tablespoons, dessert-spoon, three table-napkins, and napkin ring...

All clothes and other articles are to be, as far as possible, of Irish material and manufacture. Boarder's clothes are kept in repair at the School free of charge.

It is suggested that parents should dress their boys in the Irish kilt, which apart from its claims as a distinctly national form of dress, provides an economical, hygienic, and becoming costume for boys.²¹

Although suits, rather than kilts, are first mentioned, Patrick Pearse's school emphasised that they should be of Irish manufacture. And while recommending the kilt on the grounds of national distinction, equal weight was placed on its attractive appearance, competitive cost and hygienic properties.

HEALTH AND EXERCISE

The range and specificity of clothing requirements at St. Enda's represents a survival of Victorian dress codes—of gender, class and age—into the Edwardian era. But at the same time, international modernising ideas were promoting function and health over formality and display. Against the laces, flounces and starch of 1910, recognition was emerging that children required physical activity, exercise and air to flourish, along with a growing belief in the superior merits of wool over linen or silk also forming part of the 'health' agenda. In Ireland, as elsewhere, 'this focus was linked to the politics of the time, it was progressive, and looked towards the eradication of poverty and disease'—and dependency.²² Thus, in his woollen jersey, it is the smallest of the *Our Boys* trio who is in fact the harbinger of many of the qualities that were to radically redefine twentieth-century dress—informality, mobility, utility, democracy and gender neutrality—all contributing to an increasing ambivalence of dress in terms of gender, status and age.

A story in the first edition of *Our Boys* (September 1914) testifies to this new ambivalence and the now-conflicting imperatives of professional constraint and manly action. In associating the jersey with manliness, the narrative in this case appears to equate tailoring not with natural authority but with emasculation. 'How we Got The Rifles' illustrates its two main protagonists.

The older man, Shawn O'Driscoll (Fig. 11.6) is dressed in a thick jersey and firm peaked cap. He:

like most of the older islanders had sailed round the world in every sea. Pure descendents they were of those who made the name Finian O'Driscoll a terror to his foes ... And to-day you find them the same daring spirits, part pilot, part fisherman, part farmer.²³

By contrast, respectable Master Jack (with 'an uncle a priest') appears in shirt and tie, tailored jacket and soft cap and is described as a 'pale-faced city boy' down from Dublin after a hard year's work for a scholarship. Despite his erudition, it takes his experiences in rural Ireland to see 'proved the courage and daring and patriotism of the Irish peasant'.²⁴

Within conservative and respectable circles, jersey fabric had heretofore been confined, for older boys, to underwear or the sports field. But through the 1920s and 1930s, acceptance of the jersey converged

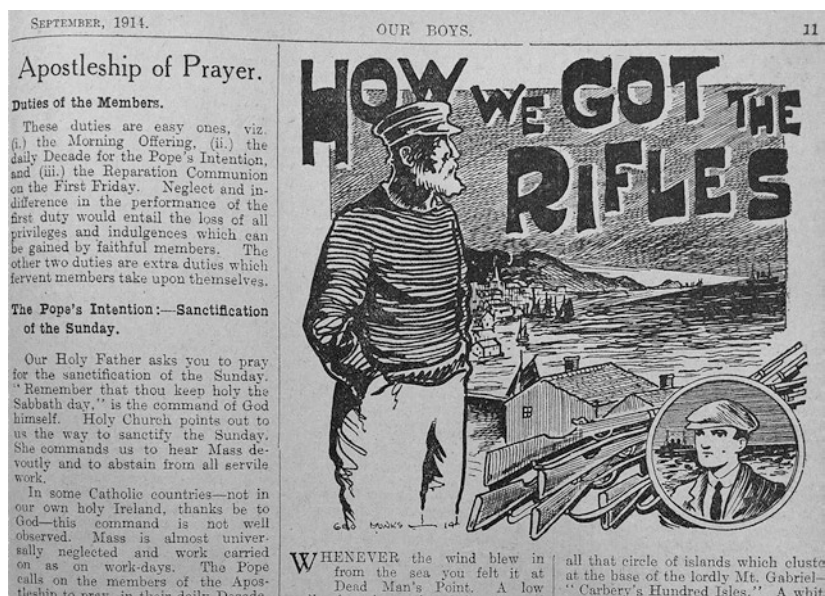


Fig. 11.6 *Our Boys*, September 1914. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

with agendas of both nationalism and modernity in promoting boyhood health and fitness. In the early issues of *Our Boys*, youths dressed in sports jerseys and shorts were restricted to photographs on the sports pages, but by the 1920s, they had graduated to more idealising illustrations on the cover. On and off the playing field, the new informality of appearance indicated by jersey, both fabric and garment, had a growing impact on everyday wear.

INFORMALITY

Developing ideas on health, exercise and democracy had begun to transform mainstream dress. Clothes transitioning from sports to mainstream wear included the blazer and flannel trousers with turn-ups. Originally worn for cricket, each offered, in movement and social tone, an increasing ease in everyday attire while maintaining a gentlemanly air of sporting leisure. By the 1920s, both had become the official and unofficial uniform of schoolboys in England. Adopted first at English public schools, they came to be emulated across the school system. In *Our Boys*, the blazer is already clearly evident in 1914 in the bold striped jacket on the Editor's page (Fig. 11.4). Albeit in quieter styles, it features more strongly in the 1920s, and by 1938, the piped blazer, crested cap, striped tie and short trousers encapsulate the schoolboy character of William Hickey's Murphy (Fig. 11.9, left).

As belief in the healthy benefits of the outdoors, exercise and sunshine had become almost a cult throughout the 1920s and 1930s, elements of sportswear became more acceptable for everyday wear, just as the knitted jersey progressed from being the garb of sailors and fishermen to acceptable wear for children and for increasingly older boys. This culminated in its entering the wardrobe of respectable adult men by the early 1930s when Edward, Prince of Wales, adopted a Fair Isle jumper and plus four breeches to wear while playing golf.

One signal development of the 1920s and 1930s in male attire was the wider adoption of the open-necked shirt. Worn by labourers through the nineteenth century, it entered the mainstream through an alignment of the politics of democracy, modernity and health, though remains questionable even today for any formal circumstance. While the photographic record from the 1920s and 1930s documents the rapid adoption of the open, soft-collared shirts on boys of all ages, instructional

and promotional imagery resisted change. Advertisements for boys' outfitters continued to show formally dressed, suited and booted boys, the interests of established clothing businesses threatened by the promotion of a more casual style. Likewise, allowing a visible relaxation of social conventions would discomfit and undermine the conservative agenda; commissioned illustrations in publications aimed at schools continued to promote a more formal appearance. Even when shown helping their mother in the garden, or taking home a catch of fish in a jar, small boys are depicted in soft collar and tie.²⁵ To the conservative mind, the new relaxed modes were seen as slovenly:

Our dress should display neither vanity nor ostentation ... Negligence, on the other hand, should be equally avoided. It is usually the effect of sloth, and is too often accompanied with a neglect of personal cleanliness.²⁶

UNIFORMS AND UNIFORMITY

Not surprisingly, these new freedoms of democracy and informality met countervailing energies in a drive towards control, regulation and uniformity emanating from established centres of authority, such as church, state and educators. While each of these overtly celebrated 'independence' this meant political and national, not personal self-definition. As varieties of uniform attire increasingly identified Irish private education, other schools adopted key elements, such as a school cap or tie. In 1928 Davis & Co., West Essex Street, Dublin, advertised in *Our Boys* their 'Sivad' College and School Caps:

All are agreed that the Caps supplied are the best and better than the imported article at no greater cost. Why pay tax and keep Irish people unemployed? Keep the money in circulation at home and support a service which is materially contributing to the industrial welfare of the nation.²⁷

Besides the private establishments listed in the advertisement are nine run by the Christian Brothers, among them O'Connell Schools on North Richmond Street, Dublin. Two photographs from 'The Brothers' can serve as a before-and-after comparison of the effectiveness of this school cap in achieving at least visual order.

A 1934 group shot of O'Connell schoolboys (Fig. 11.7) shows quite a mix of diverse coloured suits, some single-breasted, others double-breasted, most in shirt and tie, though three with open-necked soft collars and one in a polo shirt. Five boys are wearing jerseys including the fashionable Fair Isle. One year later (Fig. 11.8), the class are presented in their best for a Confirmation photograph. Order reigns; not only through the unifying 'Confirmation Suit' but also the different hair styles and colours disappear under the crested school cap. A uniform ribbon helps unite the diversity of suit-colour, cut and fabric—and only one jersey is even slightly visible. In this decade of widespread hardship, the aim of regimented conformity is most economically attained by these simple unifying devices. What remains, of course, is the contradiction between the Christian Brothers' avowed celebration of the variety and colour of Celtic youth in *Our Boys* and the opposing proposition



Fig. 11.7 O'Connell Schools, Dublin, 1934. Photograph of 40 boys, aged about 9 or 10 years old, wearing a mixture of jumpers and suits, with a variety of open and closed collars. Image author's collection



Fig. 11.8 O'Connell Schools, February 1935. The same class as Fig. 11.7, now dressed in Confirmation suits with school cap, crest and medal. Image author's collection

of youth as a force to be uniformly moulded, in dress, education and outlook.

BUY IRISH, DREAM AMERICA

Fianna Fáil had come to power in 1932, partly on a platform publicised as:

A plan ... to employ Irishmen in Ireland to grow our food, make our clothes and our implements, to provide the materials for our houses, instead of getting that work done for us by foreigners in other countries.²⁸

The results of this policy quickly emerged in the advertising pages of *Our Boys* with a proliferation of shops and manufactures throughout Ireland promoting stock that includes Irish goods. This drive to support Irish manufacture is shrewdly woven into the fortnightly schoolboy story of Murphy, with the hero no longer clad in piped blazer, crested cap and



Fig. 11.9 Murphy, the schoolboy in tweed suit (e.g. 28 September 1939, right), more than a year after his initial appearances dressed in blazer, flannel and school cap (e.g. 28 April 1938, left). Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

striped tie but in the distinctive mottle of an Irish tweed suit, any implications of provinciality countered, in this instance, by the association with air travel (Fig. 11.9).

But as Fianna Fáil sought to finally realise an Irish-Ireland through policies of legislation, taxation and embargo, they were outflanked and swamped by unstoppable forces, among them American culture advancing through the consuming power of cinema. Recognising the need to compete with Hollywood, and maybe aiming to counter the concentrated diet of Irishness following national policies of self-sufficiency, storylines in *Our Boys* developed correspondingly wider horizons. Narratives were set more in exotic places like the jungle, the Orient and Alaska, and with adult protagonists. From at least the 1930s, they focussed more on adventure, exploration, detective work or science fiction and the norms of dress depicted increasingly derived from cinema. Trench coats and Trilbys denote detectives, double-breasted suits express propriety, or—too sharply, or loosely cut—the fraudster, while overalls and flap-capped caps announce the adventurer. Cowboys in check shirts become a main stock-in-trade. But while all these illustrational sartorial novelties expanded a shared wardrobe of the imagination, few would risk such at home, even if they could afford the variety. For many men, and boys, any experimentation in dress might constitute a threat to their status or their masculinity.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to show how, in the independence years, authorities in Ireland tried to enlist dress in a wider programme of constructing Irish boyhood. The evidence suggests, however, that it was rather the authority of dress which impelled the institutions themselves into compromising positions they were unable, or unwilling to acknowledge.

When in 1914 the Christian Brothers presented Turlough O'Brien's personal crisis of identity as an emblem of the national struggle, they seemed unaware that it just as well characterised their own institutional dilemma, of how to express a distinctive national-heroic spirit while conforming to the norms of middle-class respectability essential for employability and social mobility in a transforming modern era.

'National Irish dress' did indeed form a familiar part of political and public discourse prior to 1916, but in the years following independence, this drive dissipated, and an *Our Boys* cover of July 1922 perhaps unintentionally expresses its decline (Fig. 11.10, left). At a pivotal moment, just before the establishment of the Free State, the sketch rather hollowly attempts to align the spirit of ancient Ireland with the vigour of modern youth in a selection of poorly drawn boys, feebly cheered on by a leader in kilt and *brat*.

Against the incontrovertible authority of modernity, besides the exigencies of founding and running a fledgling country, the proposition of



Fig. 11.10 Three covers of *Our Boys*, July 1922; 4 August 1927; 11 April 1935. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

kilt and *brat* as Irish 'national identity' became more challenging and less plausible.²⁹ Nonetheless, in 1927 the outright abandonment of any declaration of difference perhaps suggests a dispirited weakening of conviction (Fig. 11.10, centre). Five years after the founding of the Free State, there is little to distinguish the magazine as Irish, in dress, typography or ornament. Here, support for the boy athletes comes from a line of besuited senior-school 'chums' whose leader sports cricket flannels and blazer, and waves his school cap.

But national pride is reasserted in modern, inspirational form, in a gripping cover of *Our Boys* in April 1935 (Fig. 11.10, right). Here, a jersey-clad hurler steps out of the Celtic interlace as the contemporary incarnation of Cúchulainn, echoed behind him with spear and breast-plate in a circular shield-frame. In this powerfully conceived design, printed in navy and flame orange, a convincing image for the Irish youth hero is realised. Internationally modern yet connected with native history, it enshrines the Celtic past as a spiritual heritage, without tramelling the liberating modernity of the present. It equates the unfettered body with antiquity, the hero-hurler a rediscovery of the mythic freedom of *Na Fianna*. Projecting a modern athleticism, the jersey and shorts, escape any suggestion of 'costume' or 'fancy dress'. Hurling, being so unmistakably Irish, did not need the support of 'Gaelic' attire.

The 'national costume' was henceforth reserved mainly for theatre, ceremony and competition, from *Feiseanna* to parading pipe bands, where its fixed symbolic clarity kept it insulated from the triumphs and failures of fashion. Possibilities for national revival represented by Irish games, language and music were recognised as more promising than the ambiguous 'language' of clothing. Unravelling distinct strands, of nationalism, internationalism, tradition and modernity, Christian virtue and class anxiety is better achieved in retrospect. The *Our Boys* illustrations of 1910–1940, by contrast, show the challenge of maintaining a fully coherent stance as the conflicting agendas remained intensely in contest.

However compelling for some might have been the issue of national identity, more pressing still, for a greater number, was hard-won social status. This chapter has outlined the valiant effort of church and state, as represented by the educational system, to forge campaigns of national duty and Christian morality from the same materials, consumed in

practice more for social status and personal self-realisation. Advertising and marketing, as ever, may have better felt the pulse of the nation, the clothes shop Revington's of Tralee exhorting:

Remember Boys, the importance of your Clothing when you have to keep up appearance with your school-fellows. Revington's cater for the most fashionable people.³⁰

As much as the Fianna Fáil government advocated buying Irish, and avoiding the 'English' dress that constitutes much of the *Our Boys* imagery, they often found their own counsel hard to take. This is generously conceded by Todd Andrews who 'describes with some irony', how in the 1920s the urban republicans who had fought against the Treaty were at first puritanical in outlook and behaviour: 'We disapproved of wearing formal clothes – tuxedos, evening or morning dress and above all, silk hats ... We disapproved of golf and tennis and plus fours and white flannels that went with them ... Within 10 years we had done all the above – and visited France'.³¹

Christopher Andrews, though a lifelong republican and pupil of both St Enda's and the Christian Brothers, was nicknamed Todd, it seems, after the English comic book character Alonzo Todd, an affluent 'Greyfriars' schoolboy appearing in *The Magnet*. The sartorial dilemma Andrews admits can itself be seen as a direct correlation of the conflicted agenda in *Our Boys*. There, stories might seek overtly to construct a persuasive ideal, original to Ireland, combining Christ and Cúchulainn. But, in illustration, advertising and subtext, it was a hidebound middle-class conformity and behaviour that was effectively endorsed. All the fear of truly standing out, from person to nation, is sounded as 'wise counsel' in *Christian Politeness*:

Be not the first on whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside³²

And while it may have taken Todd Andrews and his comrades some time to work this out, Brendan Behan understood all along that falling into line with prevailing practices, of fashion and modernity, was a boy's best course of action. As he well appreciated:

'you might as well be out of the world, as out of fashion'
'The Confirmation Suit'.³³

NOTES

1. Brendan Behan, *After The Wake* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1981), 41. Originally published 1953 *The Standard*.
2. This paragraph is based on Michael Flanagan, "'To Enlighten and Entertain", Adventure Stories in "Our Boys" Paper', *Irish Communications Review* 12, no. 1 (January 2010): 88–102. <http://arrow.dit.ie/icr/vol12/iss1/>; Michael Flanagan, 'Irishman's Diary', *The Irish Times*, July 14, 2014, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/an-irishman-s-diary-on-our-boys-1.1863585>.
3. Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003), 32.
4. Tony Farnar, *Ordinary Lives* (Dublin: A&A Farnar, 1995), 109.
5. Christian Brothers, *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth* (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1921), 39.
6. Research began with an examination of the National Library collection of *Our Boys* from 1914 to 1940 at five year intervals: 1914, 1919, 1924, 1929, 1934 and 1939. If years were missing the previous and subsequent holdings were looked at instead.
7. Christian Brothers, *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth*, 116–118.
8. Christian Brothers, *Our Boys* (Dublin: Eason & Son, November 1914), 63.
9. Christian Brothers, *Our Boys*, November 1914, 65.
10. Fianna Éireann, *Fianna Handbook* (Dublin: Central Council of Na Fianna Éireann [1914?]), 21–22.
11. Christian Brothers, *Our Boys*, September 1914, 22–23.
12. Linda King and Elaine Sisson, *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922–1992* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 116.
13. Christian Brothers, *Our Boys*, July 1916, 327.
14. Christian Brothers, *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth* (1875), 20.
15. Christian Brothers, *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth* (1921), 16.
16. In her rules for behaviour at school she cautions; 'Do not stare about you or gape or yawn or fling yourself into careless or lolling positions' (41). Her advice on posture and bearing is presented in equal parts as manners, morals and patriotism, with the book dedicated to 'the Dear Children of Ireland That They Honour The Beloved Land.' The copy in the National Library bears a handwritten note on the cover—'each student to get.'
17. Katharine Tynan, *A Little Book of Manners* (Dublin: Talbot Press [c.1920]), 9.
18. 'Padraic Pearse: The Man Who Loved The Children', *The Clarion Reader, Junior* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1934), 148.

19. Christian Brothers, *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth* (1921), 37–38.
20. Kevin C. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2006), 34.
21. 'Resources', *St Enda's Prospectus 1910–1911*, Pearse Museum Website, The Office of Public Works, accessed December 19, 2017, <http://pearsemuseum.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Scoil-%C3%89anna-Prospectus-1910-11.pdf>.
22. Elizabeth Wilson and Lou Taylor, *Through the Looking Glass* (London: BBC Books, 1989), 76.
23. Christian Brothers, *Our Boys*, September 1914, 11.
24. Christian Brothers, *Our Boys*, September 1914, 14.
25. *The Clarion Reader, Junior* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1934), 59; *The Ireland School Readers Preparatory Book* (Dublin: Alex Thom), frontispiece.
26. Christian Brothers, *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth* (1921), 42.
27. Christian Brothers, *Our Boys*, June 7, 1928, iii.
28. Tony Farmar, *Ordinary Lives* (Dublin: A&A Farmar, 1995), 114.
29. For a further discussion of National Dress and Irish independence see Hilary O'Kelly 'National Dress and 1916', in *Making 1916: The Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising*, eds. Joanna Brück and Lisa Godson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 164–175.
30. Christian Brothers, *Our Boys*, June 23, 1938, 694.
31. Farmar, *Ordinary Lives*, 83; Andrews cited in Farmar, *Ordinary Lives*, 83–85.
32. Christian Brothers, *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth* (1921), 42.
33. Brendan Behan, *After The Wake*, 43.



CHAPTER 12

The Boy Scouts in Ireland: Urbanisation, Health, Education, and Adolescence, 1908–1914

Brendan Power

INTRODUCTION

The formation of the Boy Scouts in 1908 by Robert Baden-Powell was the outcome of a multitude of factors concerned with both external and internal anxieties within the UK. Amongst the perceived external threats were increasing global industrial competition and the growing might of German naval expansion. This was coupled with concerns surrounding the poor performance of the armed forces in the Boer War which heightened apprehension surrounding the ability of Britain to retain its vast empire. Internal threats focused on the growth of organised labour and fears surrounding physical deterioration in urban centres. The intentions of the Boy Scouts have been explored by a number of scholars with divergent interpretations regarding military recruitment being the

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primary aim set against the educational aims concerned with character development and citizenship training.¹

This issue of the imperialist ambitions of the Boy Scouts has long been debated. Baden-Powell was an imperial enthusiast, and Allen Warren has highlighted recurring concerns in Baden-Powell's writings such as appeals for national political and social unity along with an emphasis on personal health as reflective of national strength and the need for character training.² However, these views were adaptable and evolved over time, and imperial sentiment manifested itself in varying degrees in different national and local contexts. In Ireland, there were a variety of views amongst organisational leaders about the purpose and aims of the Boy Scouts. For example, Anthony Traill, provost of Trinity College, Dublin, and president of the Leinster provincial council of the Boy Scouts, stated that 'there can be no doubt that a million Boy Scouts in England means in ten years a million men able to defend her shores against invasion', continuing that this will 'do away with conscription and compulsory service, to which the nation seems to have an ingrained aversion'.³ Thus, certainly for some, the organisation was seen a means of ameliorating concerns regarding military preparedness with the Boy Scouts envisioned as supplanting the campaign for military service. In contrast, even prior to the outbreak of World War I, Boy Scout leaders in Ireland were more focused upon the organisation as means of promoting international peace. The Dublin Boy Scouts saw their role as aiding in the development of friendly relations between different nationalities and promoting a 'feeling of sympathy between the rising generations'. They argued that

international peace can only be built on one foundation, and that is an international desire for peace on the part of the people themselves in such strength as to guide their Governments. If the price of one Dreadnought were made available for us for developing this international friendliness and comradeship, it is certain that we in the Scouts would do more towards preventing war than all the Dreadnoughts put together.⁴

Tim Jeal has rightly pointed out that whether or not the early aims of the Boy Scouts were civil or imperialist 'the Movement itself transcended such considerations from its earliest infancy'.⁵

However, the specific conditions of Ireland proved a challenging context in which to maintain the Boy Scouts avowed non-political and

non-military character. While the Boy Scouts were a declared apolitical organisation, their connections with the Ulster Volunteer Force betray some political consciousness. On occasion, there were reports of Boy Scouts activity in connection with political events. In late 1913, the *Belfast Telegraph* drew the attention of the government to the Boy Scouts in Ulster, suggesting that they might prove a useful adjunct to the Ulster Volunteer Force.⁶ At an Ulster Volunteer demonstration in Randalstown, in north-west Antrim in 1914, Edward Carson had his car escorted by a number of Boy Scouts in uniform.⁷ Similarly, at field manoeuvres connected with the Tyrone regiment of the Ulster Volunteers the Boy Scouts aided by keeping within bounds the assembled spectators that had gathered to see the regiment.⁸ In April 1912, the 16th Belfast Troop took part in welcoming Conservative party leader, Andrew Bonar Law, to Ireland.⁹ Hedley W. Craig, Boy Scouts organising secretary for Ireland in 1913, wrote that he had 'the personal assurances of those Scoutmasters in the North who are associated with politics that they will use every endeavour to keep the movement free of political taint'.¹⁰ However, Alvin Jackson has argued that it is possible 'given the effective limitation of overtly Unionist youth movements like the Young Citizens's Volunteers to Belfast, that organizations such as the Scouts were consciously regarded as filling a gap in rural protestant mobilization'.¹¹

The outbreak of World War I has been chosen as the end date of this chapter as the war provoked a profound shift in youth culture and the implications of this would require discussion of a broader range of issues which would be beyond the scope of this chapter.¹² Despite the focus on the militarist, imperialist, and political motivations of the Boy Scouts, there are a much larger number of contexts in which they can be situated. This chapter focuses on a limited number of these relating to the Boy Scouts in Ireland, namely concerns surrounding urbanisation, health, education, and how these were integrated with ideas relating to adolescence. Many of these issues also affected other youth organisations operating in Ireland in the period. The Boys' Brigade, the Catholic Boys' Brigade, the Hibernian Boys' Brigade, and Fianna Éireann had differing motivations, including religious and overtly political aims, but also shared concerns regarding urbanisation, adolescence, physical health, and the impact of cultural developments.¹³

In their early growth, the Boy Scouts made rapid gains in membership which in 1909 was 51,467, in 1910 100,298, and by 1914 a little under

Table 12.1 Membership of the Irish Boy Scouts, 1911–1913^a

	1911	1912	1913
Associations	13	–	–
Troops	58	–	–
Scoutmasters	56	–	–
Assistant Scoutmasters	62	–	–
Scouts	1651	–	–
Total	1769	1713	2505

^a*Boy Scouts Headquarters Gazette*, 1910–1913

Table 12.2 Membership of the UK Boy Scouts excluding Ireland, 1911^a

	England	Scotland	Wales
Associations	494	–	46
Troops	3189	510	141
Scoutmasters	3242	538	145
Assistant Scoutmasters	2995	511	139
Scouts	81,267	13,766	3614
Total	87,504	14,815	3898

^a*Boy Scouts Headquarters Gazette*, 1911

150,000.¹⁴ The Boy Scouts were formed in Ireland in 1908, the same year as the parent organisation. The earliest troops in the country were founded in Dublin, Bray and Greystones, in Co. Wicklow, Dundalk, Co. Louth, and in Belfast. In February 1909, Dublin Scouts numbered 800 which had risen by the end of the year to 1500.¹⁵ By 1915, the movement in Dublin was composed of three separate associations. The county of Dublin had seventeen troops, composed of 800 scouts. The city association had eleven troops and between 200 and 300 scouts.¹⁶ In 1918, there were 750 boys in the Dublin Boy Scouts.¹⁷ In 1916, the Belfast local association reported that there were twenty-three troops comprising 872 Scouts in Belfast. This represented a yearly increase in one troop and twenty-five Scouts, and by 1917, the number of troops increased to twenty-eight.¹⁸ Boy Scout membership is outlined below in Tables 12.1 and 12.2.

The social composition of membership in Ireland can be examined by statistical analysis which provides an insight into what social classes joined the Boy Scouts. This is of importance as the Boy Scouts were keen to emphasise class harmony as an outcome of their activities.¹⁹

An examination of 118 scoutmasters and assistant scoutmasters of the Dublin Boy Scouts from 1908 to 1918 demonstrates that 75% held middle-class occupations.²⁰ The social composition of rank and file scouts of the Dublin Boy Scouts can be determined by an analysis of the occupations of the head of the household in which members lived. The analysis shows that in Dublin from a sample of 567 members from 1908 to 1918 53% came from working-class families.²¹ This is in contrast to the assertions of a number of historians who argue that the majority of early members came from middle-class backgrounds.²²

ADOLESCENCE AND URBANISATION

The emergence of adolescence as a concept in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the result of an increasingly sophisticated analysis of different life stages through insights from the social sciences along with a variety of social, economic, legislative, and educational changes in the period. Adolescence came to denote ‘a specific splice of childhood that had never before been identified, having been subsumed in the more general category of “youth”’, and between 1890 and 1914, adolescents ‘came to be seen as a distinct age group with its own peculiar problems of physical and social development and adjustment’.²³ The construction of adolescence as a period of stress and turmoil meant that adult influence ‘came to be regarded as essential if the proper course of mental and physical growth was not to be impaired’.²⁴ The Boy Scouts were designed to cater for those at an age when many adolescents were leaving school and entering the labour force, and this abrupt end to schooling raised fears that the habits and values taught such as punctuality, obedience, order, self-control, and cleanliness would be too easily forgotten.²⁵

These concerns were primarily focused upon urban youth. This is connected to evolving understandings of urban centres which underwent fundamental transformation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Numerous commentators on the phenomena of growth in large cities began to argue that this development brought with it distinguishing characteristics that resulted in a change in the attitudes and behaviours of urban inhabitants. Early commentators on the experience of urban life reflected the deep concerns that were emerging about the negative consequences of urbanisation. Ferdinand Tönnies argued that traditional community bonds were being replaced by more temporary

and fleeting relationships based on functional needs in urban settings where inhabitants interacted to the extent necessary for their desired ends. Georg Simmel similarly suggested that relationships in urban centres were transient with interactions becoming increasingly performative. He argued that the sensations and interactions of urban life were so overwhelming that people adopted a *blasé* attitude to protect themselves. Adna Ferrin Weber highlighted the negative implications of urbanisation, specifically the provocation of inter-class conflict and the greater propensity for the breakdown of communal bonds leading to excessive individualism.²⁶ Thus, it was being increasingly realised that the initial economic impetus for urbanisation produced hitherto unexperienced political and social pressures.

PHYSICAL DETERIORATION

In the UK, concerns also emerged regarding the connections between urbanisation and physical health. Public health, mortality, and disease were amongst the major social problems of many nineteenth-century cities, and in Ireland, 'few things struck the visitor to the country more than the dirt and squalor of many Irish cities'.²⁷ Such concerns were heightened in the early twentieth century with the emergence of concerns regarding the physical deterioration of the population which were provoked by military recruiting statistics.²⁸ Regarding the condition of Irish people, Daniel John Cunningham, professor of anatomy at Trinity College Dublin and later Edinburgh University and chairman of the anthropometric committee of the British Association, stated that 'if there is any part of the United Kingdom in which physical deterioration is to be expected more than another it is in Ireland'.²⁹ Dr. Charles Browne contrasted urban and rural environments and commented on the 'the evil influences of town life on the physique' which resulted in conditions of squalor and bad ventilation, contributing to the 'stunting of growth and the blunting of some of the faculties'. For him, a comparison could be made between the urban and rural populations; Browne commented that 'the difference in physique between the men of the farming class and the working people of the towns is very striking'.³⁰

While a committee established to investigate these claims did not find evidence of deterioration, they did compile new information on the prevalence of a low standard of physical health, especially amongst children.³¹ Sir John E. Gorst, former solicitor general for England and Wales

and former vice-president of the committee on education, argued that investigations revealed a particular prevalence of ill-health amongst children writing that,

These investigations leave no doubt that in the poorer districts of Great Britain and Ireland, a large proportion of the children-the exact proportion there is no evidence to determine-is growing up so deteriorated by starvation and from insufficient and improper food, that they can never become normal citizens, that they will be the seed-bed of disease and crime, and that as long as they live they must remain a burden on society.³²

The fear of physical deterioration amongst children prompted policies designed to encourage a greater emphasis on cleanliness. Thomas John Alexander, head inspector of Co. Cork for the Irish Commission of National Education, reported that teachers were required by the rules of the Board of Education to promote cleanliness and to satisfy themselves by personal inspection every morning that children had their faces and hands washed. However, he observed that these rules appeared to be 'very imperfectly observed'.³³ F.H. Dale, in his report into Irish primary education in 1904, wrote that classrooms were frequently of insufficient size to accommodate pupils and the condition of the average school buildings in Belfast and Dublin was 'markedly inferior' to those in other parts of the UK. In schools, the most 'marked defect' was 'the want of cleanliness'. He described classrooms where 'the floors were generally dirty; and the walls and cupboards often covered with dust'. He wrote that

out of the hundreds of Schools that I have inspected in various districts of England, I have never seen any in which the offices were kept with such utter disregard of health and decency as several cases that I saw during my short stay in Ireland. It is hardly necessary to point out that this neglect prevents the primary Schools from accomplishing one of their main objects-the training of the children in habits of cleanliness and order.³⁴

In this regard, improvement had been slow to materialise as the same issue had been highlighted by the royal commission into Irish primary education thirty-four years earlier.³⁵ In 1902, William Joseph Myles Starkie, resident commissioner for national education in Ireland, wrote that 1100 schools were 'scarcely habitable'.³⁶

This prevalence of fears surrounding the health of young children in urban locations ensured that organisations aiming to provide for their physical development by engaging in rurally orientated activities, such as the Boy Scouts, generated public interest. An *Irish Times* investigation into the conditions of the poor within the city of Dublin remarked that ‘compared with other large centres of population in the Kingdom, Dublin is deplorably deficient in philanthropic resources for the rescue of the children of the poor from the evil influence and contamination of their environment’. The report concluded that organisations devoted to physical culture would ‘be attractive to young people, and calculated to lure them from evil companionship and debasing habits’.³⁷

RURAL ORIENTATION

These perceptions of the urban environment were a key determinant of the concerns that the Boy Scouts embodied and was central to how they constructed a particular vision of adolescent life. The dominant discourse constructed centred on the artificiality of urban life, the distance from nature, the stifling of the natural impulses of adolescent boys, and the perception of boys as restless and lacking in self-control. As a result of such perceptions, extolling the virtues of the rural environment became a cornerstone of the Boy Scouts policy.³⁸ Thomas Galway Houston, principal of Coleraine Academical Institution, stated that the Boy Scouts had the potential to capture a boy’s love of adventure and channel it towards constructive ends. A Boy Scout troop had been started in the institute, and for him, the organisation was an undertaking designed ‘to turn to profit all a boy’s love of adventure, the feeling that made him devour tales of moving incidents by field and flood, that prompted him to run away from school or home for a life of adventure at sea or some happy hunting ground in the Far West’. He argued that it was particularly necessary in contemporary life as ‘it was the feeling that made him turn hooligan or Apache’ and ‘the feeling often long outlasted boyhood’. He continued that in previous times ‘there had been plenty of vent for it in constant wars, in crusades, in voyages of discovery’ but ‘in modern life there was little opening for it, and it had to be bottled up to a degree that was often painful and sometimes dangerous to the young heart that was possessed by it’.³⁹

Such assertions reflect how the contemporary psychological understandings of adolescence informed the practical organisation of children’s

associational culture in Ireland. *Adolescence* by Granville Stanley Hall was a landmark publication in 1904 and was 'the most effective statement of adolescence as an independent age group between childhood and adult life'.⁴⁰ In this seminal work, Hall adapted Darwin's evolutionary theory to psychology and gave new weight to the theory of recapitulation which held that individual human growth stages were representative of the different stages of the development of the human race as a whole.⁴¹ His analysis of the characteristics of adolescence emphasised the turbulence and vulnerability of the period, and a lack of self-control 'was said to exemplify the very 'nature' of the age-group'. As a result, Harry Hendrick has argued that 'young people found themselves imprisoned by their own physiological and psychological development since, according to their critics, they had not yet learned how to control either their bodies or their psyches' with consequent fears that if not catered for 'they posed a number of social, [and] economic' threats. The result of such analyses 'was to cast an uneasy shadow over youth as its strongest lines emphasized upheaval, instability, confusion, and plasticity, all of which necessitated sensitive handling in a carefully controlled environment' and 'appeared to confirm the importance of regulating both their environment and their behaviour'.⁴²

These psychological insights led to increased apprehension surrounding adolescents and their perceived instability and vulnerability. Of particular concern were working-class adolescents which highlights that adolescence in Ireland was experientially differentiated by class. There were anxieties surrounding permissiveness in working-class households, and 'a common form of laxity was to allow the children to knock about the streets till late at night'.⁴³ Many working-class adolescents were active in the labour market, and their presence on urban streets provoked fears and anxieties about unruly behaviour and inadequate socialisation.⁴⁴ These adolescents in a state of semi-autonomy were still perceived 'as immature and in need of adult guidance and direction' and needed to be provided 'with limits, guidance and direction during their passage to adulthood'.⁴⁵

Such an understanding of adolescence was evident in the early development of the Boy Scouts in Ireland. Addressing a meeting in Naas town hall, Co. Kildare in 1912, Colonel Ulick de Burgh, the deputy chief commissioner of the Boy Scouts, commented that 'no lover of boys could fail to be grieved at the careless, forlorn, neglected way in which the boys of the town used to spend their spare time after school

or business hours'. He asserted that the aim of the Boys Scouts in Ireland was 'to give the boys a better time and to help them, through their amusements, to become more self-reliant, more self-respecting, and more self-restraining; to become better disciplined in mind and better developed in body'.⁴⁶

The social effect of these viewpoints was to characterise deviance from this pattern as potentially threatening to social stability and was utilised to encourage greater control over the leisure time of adolescent boys. Lord Dunleath, president of the 3rd Belfast troop, wrote that the organisation was 'making them into useful citizens instead of loafers, as some would turn into if left alone'.⁴⁷ The Dublin Boy Scouts emphasised their role in national terms, reporting that the organisation was needed as 'there can be no doubt that our nation shows signs of slackness'.⁴⁸ This emphasis on the lack of vigour and vitality in Ireland echoes concerns surrounding the decline of civilisation and the effects of urbanisation which were recurring themes in the writings of Baden-Powell. The analogy was made between the fall of Rome and the potential decline of the British empire which was heavily influenced by Elliot Mill's, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, published in 1905. Mill argued that the Roman empire had fallen because of their weakness at home, its inhabitants 'having grown indolent and too prone to easy living'. Baden-Powell perceived similar signs of weakness in the UK centred in the inner cities and their inhabitants with the urban centre being seen as central to both physical and moral decline.⁴⁹ As a result, increased regulation of adolescent life became essential to ensure adequate development. J. Haley and A.J. Weller, the scoutmasters of the 1st and 2nd troops of the Curragh Boy Scouts in Co. Kildare, wrote that they aimed 'to bring boys up as good citizens-strong, healthy, self-reliant, useful, and honest' and to 'counteract the influences of idle lounging about when schools are closed'.⁵⁰

It is noteworthy that adolescents who lived in a rural environment were not the primary focus of the Boy Scouts. George N. Hunter, a Dublin scientist, lamented that the Boy Scout organisation had not incorporated rural Ireland. He wrote that 'much has been done to make content the lot of the town boy...but so far these movements are successfully taken up in the large towns, where many boys can congregate', complaining that 'little has been done for their rural brethren'.⁵¹ The focus on urban centres as potentially dangerous ensured that the rural environment was lauded as the ideal setting for adolescent boys.

There were concerns regarding the perceived debilitating effects of modern living and the extent to which improving technologies diminished the necessity of physical exertion in everyday life. The *Irish Independent* noted how improving transport facilities meant that ‘buses, trams, trains, and motors carry them everywhere; many people are always more or less run-down and so debilitated that they become depressed and quite unable to enjoy life’.⁵² Baden-Powell was equally aggrieved, noting that ‘the increase in civilization tends more and more to destroy manliness and character. Tubes, trams and taxis don’t tend to harden us. Paid football, cinematography and test matches are making us into a civilization of lookers-on instead of leaders in enterprise’.⁵³

In the Boy Scouts, rurally orientated activities, primarily scouting and camping, were advanced as not solely a leisure pursuit but as a means of encouraging self-reliance, independence, and harnessing the biological impulses of adolescent boys, all potentially threatened by urban life. The role of camps was appreciated by James Lewis Paton, a school headmaster, who believed they were important in developing self-restraint and argued that camps ‘encourage hardiness’ and fostered a love of fresh air and outdoor life. He concluded that, ‘I am convinced that all this helps the boy’s self-control. It preoccupies his mind with manly things, and it postpones the sexual impulse’.⁵⁴ The first Boy Scouts county camp held in Ireland was in 1914 in Co. Down as ‘county camps are not common in Ireland as yet’.⁵⁵ Activities such as cooking and cleaning were seen as encouraging the scouts’ independence, and the distance from maternal influence was seen as necessary for the construction of normative masculine attitudes and behaviour. The Dublin Boy Scouts reported that ‘in camp the boys do everything for themselves, and many a lad who was formerly helpless without his mother to feed him now is able to make a good fire and to cook himself a substantial and economical meal’. Camp provided an opportunity to instruct members in physical health as boys were ‘advised as to thorough mastication, and in this connection is taught to take care of his teeth and study his digestion, not to the extent of faddiness, but in a commonsense way’.⁵⁶ In camp, scouts carried out all the work themselves including erecting tents and cooking.⁵⁷ It was argued that their independence and sense of responsibility were encouraged by ensuring they cleaned their own boots and did not wait for them ‘to be cleaned by their mothers, who already do so much for them...and so allowing the mother to have a well-deserved extra ten minutes in bed’. This effort was shown to impact upon their position

within a patrol, as ‘a Scout in camp, who left some of his work for the others to do, would soon get the name of a “shirker”, and a fellow who shirks at home is just as bad as one who shirks in camp’.⁵⁸ Members had to raise the money for their summer camps themselves which was designed to encourage them to be innovative, thrifty, resourceful, as well as developing their work ethic. For example, in 1910, the 3rd north county Dublin troop boxed shamrock and sold it to Boy Scouts throughout the UK for six pennies, and this initiative raised thirty-two shillings for their camp fund.⁵⁹ In 1912, the 3rd Belfast troop held a cake sale to cover the cost of their camp, and in 1916, the 16th Dublin troop did gardening work to earn money for camp.⁶⁰

EDUCATION

This emphasis on values was supplemented by the Boy Scouts’ construction of adolescents as requiring different educational methods than those provided by the state education sector. The Boy Scouts advocated a move away from instruction towards experiential learning. In this approach, they were influenced by the educational ideas of Friedrich Froebel and Maria Montessori who emphasised the need for self-directed learning in order for children to act independently in the world outside school. It was an awareness that children lived for the most part in contrived environments which led to disaffection as children entered adolescence which was demonstrated by their desire for exploratory adventure.⁶¹ The educational emphasis in the Boy Scouts was centred on teaching skills and knowledge by activities. They saw this as a means of imparting knowledge in a way that members would relate to and would engage them. Baden-Powell was keen to point out that the Boy Scouts ‘was not merely a pastime or a game’, and while there were fun activities, ‘there was a good deal of educational value underlying them’.⁶² For him, the organisation was ‘the realisation of juvenile romance in everyday life...but the romance is tempered by a hardly-suspected utilitarianism and more than an ounce of idealism’. He stated that ‘the scouts gain a great deal of knowledge which would prove unpalatable to them in any other form’. By being members of the Boy Scouts, they would learn ‘lessons in first aid, tracking, observation, swimming and lifesaving, thrift, and the laws of health and sanitation, all of which are taught by means of boyish games and hobbies’. He argued that ‘many a boy who thinks he is only playing at Buffalo Bill is really learning geology and natural history.

He is, moreover, receiving a moral discipline which he would resent if administered through any other agency'.⁶³

Allen Warren has argued that the perceived lack of citizenship training within the conventional curriculum, focused as it was on academic subjects, allowed the Boy Scouts to position themselves as 'the most comprehensively acceptable voluntary attempt to encourage such a development'.⁶⁴ In this regard, the encouragement of 'character' was central. The need for improved character training was also highlighted by those outside the organisation. In 1916, Sir Oliver Lodge, the noted British physicist, argued that 'education for boys who left primary school was chiefly needed in the direction of bodily discipline and character training'.⁶⁵ Irish Lord Chancellor, Sir James Campbell, noted that the Boy Scouts made such a contribution, writing that they 'provided for its members many opportunities for developing the faculties which the crowded hours of school life were compelled more or less to neglect'.⁶⁶ Baden-Powell highlighted this deficiency, noting in 1914 that the school system needed to concern itself with more than increasing literacy standards, arguing that 'no reading, writing, and arithmetic within school walls make a man a success'.⁶⁷ He had been struck by the insufficient attention to the realities of life and later wrote that: 'I came to realise how little the school training of those days prepared the average boy for the exigencies of life'.⁶⁸ The Dublin Boy Scouts noted a similar dearth of character training in the Irish education system, arguing that while it was encouraged in some public schools,

there is nothing of that kind amongst the poor class of boy in the elementary schools. There is nothing inside or outside the school walls which trains them in character. That is where the Boy Scout movement, and others of its kind, are doing good work; they are trying to inculcate in the lower order of boys some sort of character by the institution of organised games and discipline.⁶⁹

EMPLOYMENT

This emphasis on experiential learning had a practical application and was partly designed to provide adolescents with enhanced employment prospects and greater integration into the labour market. This aim was given practical expression in Ireland with Boy Scouts encouraged to attend evening schools, and the Dublin Boy Scouts had an employment bureau to

match members with local employers.⁷⁰ They aimed to provide employment opportunities for members and saw themselves as contributing to the economic development of Ireland. Baden-Powell noted the economic progress of Ireland in the period and wrote that 'Belfast of course has always had its shipbuilding, and linen, and other industries, but factories are now appearing in the centre and south, and agriculture is looking up in all parts of the country with the establishment of creameries and improved farming'.⁷¹ While he did not attribute these developments to the Boy Scouts, he saw a role for the organisation in contributing to sustaining economic development and this was echoed by other Boy Scout leaders. Colonel de Burgh noted that in the Irish Boy Scouts they hoped to teach members 'the rudiments of useful trades and to bring them into contact with people who would be helpful to them in after life'.⁷² The development of manual skills was encouraged in Irish troops, and in 1910, the commanding officer of 'A' Division of the Dublin Boy Scouts, Bernard C. Cunningham, who was employed as a clerk in the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, offered a prize of ten shillings to the scout of the division who produced 'the best article manufactured by himself unaided'.⁷³

Addressing a conference of employers, Baden-Powell commented that a corps of Boy Scouts could be started in connection with every big factory works, arguing that employers might 'encourage parents to induce their sons to become Scouts by giving preference to those who had been trained' in the organisation. It was argued that this would benefit industry as, 'boys who have spent their leisure hours in the open air, and whose physical development has consequently been promoted, are likely to be more healthy than those who have lounged about town pavements'.⁷⁴ This approach was given a practical expression in Ireland. F.J. Romanes, scoutmaster of the 1st Dublin Troop, addressed the Dublin Rotary Club in 1917 on the importance of business leaders and employers co-operating in the Boy Scout movement. He stated that the organisation was not 'a mere plaything or a recreation after a day's work', but a place where the values and skills of enterprise and business were developed. He argued that 'the scout movement trained leaders...the whole essence of their training was to train men to be leaders in business'.⁷⁵ Irish troops engaged with local employers, and it is evident that local industries saw some benefit in the organisation. In 1918, a troop of the Dublin Boy Scouts was established in connection with a manufacturing firm in the city, and in Belfast, the 33rd and 34th troops,

both formed in 1918, were attached to Workman, Clark, and Company, prominent city shipbuilders.⁷⁶ It is unclear whether troop members were existing employees of these firms or possibly the sons of employees with the troops seen as a potential pool of future employees.

Their educational activities highlight the rigid focus upon academic subjects in the state education system which demonstrated limited interest in technical skills or the relationship between schooling and the labour market. By supplementing the work of the education system in the development of practical skills, the Boy Scouts were a significant voluntary body in attempting to bridge the distance between the education sector and the labour market. Their teaching of the fundamentals of trades through classes in manual skills could be beneficial to potential future workers, and their role in developing skills and moral attitudes applicable to an economic environment was appreciated by industry as evidenced by the attachment of Boy Scout troops to manufacturing firms in both Dublin and Belfast. However, this element of the Boy Scouts work had other motivations and was not exclusively an undertaking centred on individuals. The broader social consequences of unemployment and the anxiety provoked by idleness were motivating factors. The effect of low-skilled employment by adolescents that provided little opportunity for advancement and generally terminated within a short number of years was also a concern. The anxiety provoked by large numbers of idle adolescents in urban environments raised fears of delinquency and criminality, and what the Boy Scouts provided was a structured environment under adult supervision which aimed to place boys on what was considered the appropriate path to adulthood.

CONCLUSION

The development of the Boy Scouts in Ireland demonstrates that the growth of urban centres provoked similar anxieties to urbanisation throughout the UK and the desire to engage in rurally orientated activities was seen as a powerful antidote to the perceived deficiencies of urban life. These included diminished physical health, the effects of technological advances, the unregulated environment for adolescent leisure, the potential for excessive individualism, and concerns surrounding inadequate socialisation. The opportunities for unregulated independent action in an urban environment highlight that a major concern in the period was the anxiety associated with actions outside the orbit of

adult supervision and control. This was aligned with the development of academic investigation of adolescence, and the Boy Scouts were a manifestation of this emerging conceptualisation of adolescence in Ireland. The construction of the 'nature' of adolescents focused on their vulnerability, lack of restraint, malleability, and need for adult guidance. Such insights provided the intellectual credibility to assert an increasingly interventionist approach to the leisure time of adolescents. Within such a context, psychological insights were invoked to proscribe unsupervised leisure time and subject it to needs largely dictated by middle-class leaders upon working-class members. Medical advice on the 'nature' of adolescence served to buttress prevailing anxieties so that various forms of non-productive activity were constructed as threatening to social order and national interest.

NOTES

1. See Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Paul Wilkinson, 'English Youth Movements, 1908–30', *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 2 (April 1969): 3–23; John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1977); John Springhall, 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in Relation to British Youth Movements, 1908–1930', *International Review of Social History* 16, no. 2 (August 1971): 125–158; John Springhall, 'Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement Before 1920: Citizen Training or Soldiers of the Future?' *The English Historical Review* 102, no. 405 (October 1987): 934–942; Michael Rosenthal, 'Knights and Retainers: The Earliest Version of Baden-Powell's Boy Scout Scheme', *Journal of Contemporary History* 15, no. 4 (October 1980): 603–617; Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of The Boy Scout Movement* (London: Pantheon Books, 1986); Sam Pryke, 'The Popularity of Nationalism in the Early British Boy Scout Movement', *Social History* 23, no. 3 (October 1998): 309–324; Martin Dedman, 'Baden-Powell, Militarism, and the "Invisible Contributors" to the Boy Scout Scheme, 1904–1920', *Twentieth Century British History* 4, no. 3 (January 1993): 203–207; Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001); Allen Warren, 'Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900–1920', *The English Historical Review* 101, no. 399 (April 1986): 376–398; Allen Warren, 'Baden-Powell: A Final Comment', *The English Historical Review* 102, no. 405 (October 1987): 948–950.

2. Allen Warren, 'Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guide, and an Imperial Idea', in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 236–241.
3. *Irish Times*, May 26, 1911.
4. *Dublin Evening Mail*, March 9, 1912.
5. Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 410.
6. *Irish Times*, November 8, 1913.
7. *Weekly Irish Times*, September 27, 1913.
8. *Irish Times*, February 26, 1914.
9. *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, April 28, 1912.
10. *Irish Times*, June 14, 1913.
11. Alvin Jackson, 'Unionist Politics and Protestant Society in Edwardian Ireland', *Historical Journal* 33, no. 4 (December 1990): 860.
12. For more, see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, 'Children and the Primary Schools of France, 1914–1918', in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe During the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Rosie Kennedy, *The Children's War: Britain, 1914–1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
13. For more on these youth organisations in Ireland see Brendan Power, 'Youth Movements and Ireland' (Ph.D. diss., University of Dublin, 2013); Margaret Bell, *A History of Scouting in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Scout Council, 1985); John Anthony Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland* (Dublin: Currach Press, 2006); Andrew Totten, *The Tenth: A Century of Scouting at the 10th Belfast* (Belfast: 10th Belfast Scout Group, 2009); William R. Kelly, *Firm and Deep: A History and Account of the Formation of the 1st Belfast (1st Irish) Company, the Boys' Brigade and the Subsequent Formation and Development of the Belfast Battalion* (Belfast: The Boys' Brigade Belfast Battalion, 1978); Brendan Power, 'Religion and the Irish Boys' Brigade, 1888–1914', in *Historical Perspectives on Parenthood and Childhood in Ireland*, eds. Mary Hatfield, Jutta Kruse, and Riona Nic Congáil (Dublin: Arlen Press, 2017); Brendan Power, 'The Functions of Association Football in the Boys' Brigade in Ireland, 1888–1914', *Leisure and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. William Murphy and Leeann Lane (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); Marnie Hay, 'The Foundation and Development of Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–16', *Irish Historical Studies* 36, no. 141 (2008); Marnie Hay, 'An Irish Nationalist Adolescence: Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–1923', in *Adolescence in Modern Irish History*, eds. Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

14. Wilkinson, 'English Youth Movements', 14; Pryke, 'The Popularity of Nationalism', 310.
15. *Irish Times*, September 10, 1910.
16. *Boy Scouts Headquarters Gazette* 9, no. 11 (November 1915): 295; *Dublin Evening Mail*, February 10, 1912.
17. *Irish Times*, October 24, 1918.
18. B.E.C.E. Minute Book, October 25, 1916, 7 March, 1917, Northern Ireland Scout Council.
19. Springhall, *Youth*, 63.
20. Sources: *The Scout*, 1908–1918; *Boy Scouts Headquarters Gazette*, 1909–1918; *Irish Times*, 1908–1918; *Dublin Evening Mail*, 1910–1918; *Thom's Directory*, 1891–1918; Census Records 1901 and 1911. For occupational breakdowns see Power, 'Youth Movements', 36.
21. Sources: *The Scout*, 1908–1918; *Boy Scouts Headquarters Gazette*, 1909–1918; *Irish Times*, 1910–1918; *Dublin Evening Mail*, 1910–1918; Census Records 1901 and 1911. For occupational breakdowns see Power, 'Youth Movements', 37.
22. Springhall, 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism', 138; Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 412; Sam Pryke, 'The Boy Scouts and the "Girl Question"', *Sexualities* 4, no. 2 (May 2001): 193.
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24. Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class, and the Male Youth Problem, 1880–1920* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 123.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Ferdinand Tönnies, 'Community and Society' [1887], in *Community and Society*, trans. and ed. C.P. Loomis (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' [1903], in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Hans Gerth and ed. Kurt H. Wolff (London: Collier McMillan, 1950); Adna Ferrin Weber, *The Growth of Cities in Nineteenth Century: A Study in Statistics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1899), 432–435.
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28. See for example 'Education and Deterioration', *The British Medical Journal* 2 (1903): 1541–1542; 'Physical Degeneration: The Case for Inquiry', *The British Medical Journal* 2 (1903): 1338; *Memorandum by the Director-General, Army Medical Service, on the Physical Unfitness of Men Offering Themselves for Enlistment in the Army* [Cd. 1501] (1903), 5.

29. *Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, List of Witnesses and Minutes of Evidence*, 2 [Cd. 2210] (1904), 96.
30. *Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration*, 2, 357.
31. *Report of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration*, 1, 1, cited in, J.E. Barker, 'National Military Service and National Physique', *The British Medical Journal* 2 (1908): 555; Anthony S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (London: J M Dent & Sons, 1983), 338.
32. J.E. Gorst, 'Physical Deterioration in Great Britain', *The North American Review* 181, no. 584 (July 1905): 2.
33. *The Sixty-Fourth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland* [C. 9038] (1898), 92.
34. *Report of Mr F.H. Dale, His Majesty's Inspector of Schools, Board of Education, on Primary Education in Ireland* [Cd. 1981] (1904), 3–4.
35. *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), Containing the Report of the Commissioners, with an Appendix*, 1, [C. 6] (1870), 321. See especially evidence of James William Kavanagh, a former head inspector under the Commission of National Education, who reported that the out-offices were bad or non-existent in 44.6% of Irish national schools, *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), Containing Evidence Taken Before the Commissioners from March 12th to October 30th, 1868. Questions and Answers 1 to 17608*, 3 [C. 6-II] (1870), 439.
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38. A similar rural orientation is evident in the cultural nationalism of the early twentieth century in Ireland. For example, see Mary E. Daly, 'An Alien Institution? Attitudes Towards the City in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Irish Society', *Etudes Irlandaises* 10 (December 1985): 181–182.
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40. Douglas C. Kimmel and Irving B. Weiner, *Adolescence: A Developmental Transition* (New York: Wiley, 1995), 7; Walvin, *A Child's World*, 186.
41. Granville Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904). See also, Stuart C. Aitken, *Geographies of Young People: The Morally Contested Spaces of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2001), 41, 127; Harry Hendrick,

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CHAPTER 13

‘A Youth Tainted with the Deadly Poison of Anglicism’? Sport and Childhood in the Irish Independence Period

Richard McElligott

INTRODUCTION

Chronicling the evolving relationship between sport and children in Ireland is no easy task. If academic inquiry into the history of Irish childhood is still only emerging from its infancy, the study of children and sport on the island is, at best, embryonic. While the impulse to play is as old as human civilisation itself, such ‘frivolous’ activities were rarely deemed worthy of historical record, at least until the emergence of modern, global codified sports in the latter nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly then, the games which occupied children for centuries were seen as even less deserving of document. For the most part, we have to infer children’s participation from what little references were made to sporting activity more generally. Edward III’s decree in 1365 ‘forbidding handball, football and hockey and cockfighting and all other

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useless games which can be of no profit' was no doubt aimed as much at the hordes of unruly children as the adults who participated in informal games like mob football.¹ A year later, Edward's son Lionel would issue the Statutes of Kilkenny, prohibiting the subjects of England's colony in Ireland from indulging in various native customs and practices, including the popular sport of 'horlinge' (hurling).² The clause presumably applied as much to children as young adults.

It is to the Victorian era we must turn to witness the first widespread attempts to introduce formal or codified sports to children across Britain and Ireland. From the mid-nineteenth century on, church and lay authorities and an assortment of other organisations would look to sport to project the values they wished to incubate among society's youth. The Victorians' concern with childhood and the nurturing of children's physical and moral character is hardly surprising considering that one-third of the British population at this point was under the age of fourteen.³ Educational institutions would now play an especially critical role in utilising formal sport to construct new perceptions of childhood.⁴

By the early twentieth century, elite Irish schools had embraced an ethos of athleticism, heavily promoting team sports as a means of developing a child's ethical character.⁵ For both Catholic- and Protestant-run establishments, the encouragement of such games was also a valuable means of demarcating the exclusivity of their institutions. Many educationalists likewise recognised the power of sport to indoctrinate feelings of fidelity towards the British Empire among Irish children. Conversely, Irish cultural nationalists would adapt British athleticism for an indigenism purpose, utilising Gaelic games to infuse the next generation with a sufficiently patriotic nationalist spirit. Religious organisations would also quickly appreciate the appeal of sport in campaigns to promote religious devotion. In contrast to such voluntary exertion neither the British Government nor the Free State administration which replaced it, devoted much energy to the provision of sport for Ireland's youth. Voluntary bodies and sports organisations themselves would be almost solely responsible for providing a sporting outlet for Irish children in the years under consideration. This chapter will therefore investigate how schools, religious and lay youth movements, nationalist bodies and Ireland's own sporting associations used formal sport as a means of proselytising the Irish child in the decades surrounding the creation of the Free State and the political partition of Ireland. Their motives were varied, but their common goal was to represent and appropriate Irish children for their own specific ends.

SPORT AND EDUCATION IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE IRELAND

Irish educational institutions became the means by which many children were first introduced to formal, organised sports. This was a development heavily influenced by what was occurring across the Irish Sea in Victorian Britain. The British public school system became the nursery for the modern, global, mass-spectator sports which emerged in the later nineteenth century.⁶ How and why this occurred was down to a ubiquitous culture of athleticism which soaked itself into the very fabric of elite schools from the 1860s and gradually percolated down through all strata of the British education system by the turn of the twentieth century.⁷ Anxieties over the need for greater respectability and social control in Victorian life saw formal sports being initiated in these institutions as a way of imposing discipline on their fractious students and diverting the energy of young boys, in particular, away from less desirable impulses.⁸ One notable aim was a desire to use programmes of sport to suppress students' sexual urges.⁹ From their origin as a means of social control, school sports soon became an essential and often compulsory element, in the curriculum and daily life of public schools.¹⁰ Yet the increasing worship of sport forced those in charge of these institutions to seek an ethical and educationally justifiable ideology to envelop their obsession. Hence, the cult of athleticism was born—a heady cocktail which embraced notions of muscular Christianity, social Darwinism and British imperialism.¹¹ The disciples of Thomas Arnold at Rugby saw participation in team sports as a vehicle to develop a boy's religious piety and mental facilities.¹² Meanwhile G.E.L. Cotton, the headmaster of Marlborough school, argued that a well-maintained physique was essential for fostering a Christian boy's moral, virtuous and manly character.¹³

The mantra 'a healthy body breeds a healthy mind' quickly became the slogan for athleticism. Meanwhile, increasing apprehensions about the complications and challenges of a modern, urbanised and industrialised world ensured that justifications for sport's dominance in public schools were wrapped around emerging notions of social Darwinism and the linking of success in life with prevalent naturalist theories surrounding the survival of the strongest.¹⁴ There was a growing belief that sport, especially team sport, would instil in boys the principles of moral and physical courage, teamwork, loyalty and fair play. It would also teach them to accept defeat, to be modest in victory and show them how to both command and obey.¹⁵ Such values were considered vital

for navigating the treacherous waters of adulthood.¹⁶ Feeding into this rhetoric were growing concerns about the intense competition Britain now faced as it strove to maintain its position as the world's dominant economic and military power. Team sports were seen as instrumental in honing the physical and mental qualities essential for future victories on the battlefield and for the continued successful governance of an ever-expanding British Empire.¹⁷ The simplistic, yet pervasive notion emerged that sport trained young boys for war.¹⁸

The ideology of athleticism became so dominant that by the early twentieth century, playing for the school team became the highest honour a public schoolboy could achieve.¹⁹ The cult of athleticism spilled over the walls of the elite schools and was carried by its past pupils into British universities, on to teacher training colleges, other secondary schools and finally down to elementary school level. At each stage, it adapted to the prevailing physical as well as educational conditions. By 1906, sport had become an official part of the primary school curriculum in Britain.²⁰

Ireland's education system could not remain immune to these developments. Recently, there has been much debate about the extent to which the ideology of athleticism infiltrated Irish schools in the Victorian era and the consequent significance of the role of elite and other educational institutions in the development, spread and popular appeal of modern sport on the island.²¹ The overall evidence suggests that the ripples of British athleticism certainly lapped the shores of Irish education. By the early 1900s, numerous educational institutions on this island had begun to foster sport as a means of moulding their student's moral character.

By 1911, Ireland had 489 'superior' or secondary schools with 29,159 students.²² The majority were run by Catholic and Protestant religious orders. Among this number were around sixty Irish elite colleges catering to children from the upper echelons of Irish society.²³ Though athleticism took longer to bear fruit within Irish education, its seed was borne by factors such as the estimated 1500 Irish boys who travelled annually to receive education in English public schools.²⁴ Here, they were exposed to the prevailing ethos of sport and took this knowledge back with them across the Irish Sea.²⁵ In addition, the public school model was consciously aped by elite Irish colleges such as the Catholic-run Clongowes in Kildare and the likes of the Protestant Royal Schools of

Armagh and Portora, Enniskillen.²⁶ While informal games were probably played in each, from the 1870s a determined effort was made in many to introduce the team sports which were emanating from their role models in Britain. In Ireland, the same rhetoric was used to justify the integral place of sport in these elite institutions. The Castleknock College *Chronicle* wrote: 'Is it not in their school games boys must learn that manliness, energy, enthusiasm and ingeniousness which they must afterwards show in the battle of life?'²⁷ Meanwhile, the president of St Jarlath's College, Tuam, stressed the importance the school placed on the cultivation of 'manly games' among its boys.²⁸ The conscious effort to foster sports was also another means of defining the superiority of these institutions as the preferred training grounds for the future ruling class of Ireland.²⁹

Cricket, perhaps the most popular sport in Ireland in the three decades following the Great Famine, became the principal summer game of Irish elite schools.³⁰ It was seen by principals and headmasters as an ideal way of promoting a moral education.³¹ Michael Cusack, the founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), was a staunch believer in the character-building proprieties of the game. Cusack had taught at several elite institutions, including Blackrock, and in 1882 wrote: 'You may be certain that the boy who can play cricket well, will not, in after years, lose his head and get flurried in the face of danger'.³² From the 1880s, soccer also became a feature in many elite schools and, like cricket, was valued for the principles of team building, group loyalty and fairness it promoted among young boys. By 1884, the Irish Football Association (IFA) had inaugurated a Schools Cup.³³ In Leinster, both Clongowes College and Castleknock College played a prominent role in the game's spread and popular appeal. Castleknock's students were instrumental in the establishment of the Bohemians Football Club in 1890, the first team outside Ulster to compete in the Irish Football League.³⁴

However, rugby was to become the sport most associated with elite education in Britain and Ireland, a development instrumental to the diffusion of the game among the Irish middle classes.³⁵ Within two years of the formation of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) in 1874, the Ulster Schools Cup was inaugurated and Armagh Royal School won the trophy in seven out of the first ten years.³⁶ The Leinster Senior Cup, begun in 1887, saw another bastion of athleticism, Blackrock College,

win the competition twenty times before 1914.³⁷ Schools rugby was described in the *Belfast Newsletter* as ‘the nursery of Empire-builders’.³⁸ In eulogising rugby and other team sports’ prominence within these schools, and their value to the students who played them, the ideology of athleticism was constantly invoked. Addressing the pupils of the Portora Royal School in Enniskillen as ‘an old rugby captain’, the head of the Church of Ireland, Archbishop Reverend Dr. Crozier, stated:

The men and women who played the game of life really began to “play the game” in school, by learning to play the game for others as well as for themselves they learned at school that the game was better than the result ... The team that was capable of playing the game up to the last moment, no matter how many goals or points there were against them, was the team that was composed of boys who would do their duty afterwards in that state of life in which it should please God to call them.³⁹

Yet the nature of secondary education in Ireland meant that athleticism could never be as pervasive a creed as it became in Britain. Even elite colleges were dependent on fees awarded by the Board of Education which were based on students’ results in the inter-cert examinations.⁴⁰ Academic and not sporting achievement was thus the priority.⁴¹ The demands of the inter-cert examination system gave teachers and principals very little scope to indulge in extra-curricular activity.⁴² The physical constraints in which many schools operated also negated the provision of sports for pupils.⁴³ Thus, the diffusion of modern games from these elite colleges into other secondary schools and down to the national school level in Ireland was not a simple or uniform process. One prominent feature of the calendar for many schools across the education spectrum was the annual sports day. In Westmeath, the Castlepollard mixed national school sports day was sponsored by the local Countess of Longford who hosted the boys and girls on her estate.⁴⁴ In Tuam, St Jarlath’s College held a popular annual sports meeting with athletic prizes being donated by successful past pupils.⁴⁵ From the 1890s, formal games were also being introduced to national and other secondary schools on an ad hoc basis—often down to the personal whims of those who ran a particular school.⁴⁶

The British Government meanwhile showed little appetite for any formal endorsement of sport in Irish education. It was only in 1901 that a Government report recommended that some physical activity be included in the Irish national school curriculum and this was to consist

primarily of drill exercises rather than team sports.⁴⁷ Such counsel was in part a response to the alarm felt by British military and political leaders over the poor physical conditions of recruits to the British army and the corresponding fears of the physical deterioration of the British race, which recent military campaigns in South Africa had brought sharply into focus.⁴⁸

CHILDREN, SPORT AND CULTURAL NATIONALISM

The foundation of the GAA in 1884 ushered in a sporting revolution and initiated mass participation in organised sport among the Irish people.⁴⁹ Its influence would be no less transformative for children's sport both inside and outside the schoolyard. By now, Michael Cusack had over a decade of experience teaching in Irish elite schools. His exposure to these institutions meant he was a fully fledged advocate of the cult of athleticism. When he established his own grinds school to tutor students wishing to pass the civil service examination in 1877, sport was heavily embedded into his academy's curriculum. Little wonder that in 1887, he wrote approvingly:

In England the physical education of the pupils is carefully provided ... When we consider the fierceness of the fight, in the struggle for existence, which is going on at the present moment, in all parts of the globe, the keenness of the competition for positions of life ... we can hardly fail to appreciate the importance of physical training in the life of man and to fix its proper place in his education.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, it would take more than two decades before any real attempt was made by the GAA to infiltrate Ireland's education system and promote its games to the nation's youth. Writing in 1935, the prominent Gaelic games journalist P.J. Devlin acknowledged that for 'many years the GAA did not make any provision for younger players ... for the contests were deemed unsuitable for youths'.⁵¹ It might have been expected that schools run by the Christian Brothers would have been early converts to Gaelic games.⁵² Their emphasis on a nationalist education which highlighted the value of Irish history and promoted the Irish language would seem to imply they would be sympathetic to the Association's own aims.⁵³ Yet a critical reason for the Brothers' lack of enthusiasm was the Catholic Church's open hostility towards the GAA.

This was due to the perceived close links between the initial leadership of the Association and revolutionary organisations such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB).⁵⁴

However, with the dawn of the new century came the sweeping tide of the Gaelic Revival. The emergence of the Irish-Ireland movement and the growth of kindred cultural organisations such as the Gaelic League would both facilitate and inspire the promotion of Gaelic games within Irish education.⁵⁵ Schools GAA competitions were organised in Cork, Tipperary and Dublin between 1902 and 1904.⁵⁶ In December 1907, the Munster Colleges Council was formed to oversee hurling and football competitions among the province's secondary schools while three years later a Leinster Colleges Council was established.⁵⁷ In much the same way that the GAA took its example from the structures and characteristics of rival sports emerging out of Victorian Britain, but cut them to fit an Irish nationalist cloth, so too did the promoters of Gaelic games in education recraft the ideology of athleticism to suit an Irish audience. In a contemporary essay on the progress of the Dublin School League, P.J. Devlin argued:

Sickness of body and sinister minds, begotten of modern customs, are the deadliest menace to the enduring Gaelic State ... the warm-blood pastimes beloved of Cúchulainn and his companions ... are the only mediums which will keep that danger away ... Otherwise we invite racial decay, expose our nation to effeminacy and supineness of spirit and turn our backs on ... our glorious past.⁵⁸

For Irish girls meanwhile, exposure to formal sports was still uncommon. Small numbers of mostly upper-class Protestant girls played tennis, croquet and hockey within the school system, but organised sport assumed an inconsequential role in the lives of most Irish women.⁵⁹ This was not only down to the more limited numbers of females attending Ireland's secondary education system but also a consequence of widely held societal beliefs that excessive sporting or physical activity was damaging to a woman's health and diminished her capacity to procreate.⁶⁰ Yet the emergence of formal codified sports for men did begin to stir interest in women to emulate them.⁶¹ This process was further stimulated by the increasing numbers of women gaining access to higher education in Ireland by the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶² However for nationalist women, sports such as hockey were tainted with the

brush of Anglicisation. A nationalist female alternative was sought. The Gaelic League would prove crucial and in 1904, members of the Dublin Keating's branch drew up the first formal rules for a female version of hurling called camogie. By 1905, a national association, An Cumann Camógaíochta, was set up.⁶³ With hockey already entrenched as the sport of choice in Protestant girls' schools, the Camogie Association fostered links with middle-class Catholic institutions.⁶⁴ For much of the twentieth-century camogie, especially in rural counties, would provide one of the few competitive sports which young girls could participate in.

Despite these developments, an article in the 1909 *Gaelic Athletic Annual* highlighted the perceived widespread discrimination towards Gaelic games in Ireland's secondary schools and elite colleges:

Native games were regarded as degrading and inferior ... this antipathy was begotten of the impression persistently forced upon them that the native games were the unskilled pastimes of a savage and uncontrollable peasantry. Yet it is that same peasantry ... that preserves the physical qualities of the race, and sends forth men who, in athletic prowess, surpass the products of the whole world.⁶⁵

A clear class bias was apparent to the author with elite schools, and those attempting to ape them, rejecting Gaelic games because of the close connections between such pastimes and the poorer echelons of rural Irish society. Nevertheless, the prevailing atmosphere of the Irish cultural revival convinced a growing number of nationalists that if the ideal of a truly Gaelic Ireland was to be achieved, it was vital that children be educated along nationalist lines. This was even more imperative at a time when children were being exposed to a tsunami of British cultural influences.⁶⁶ Therefore, a raft of nationalist organisations would focus their attention on children, endeavouring to expose them to various facets of Ireland's cultural renaissance while also transmitting to them the ideals of Irish-Ireland and the Sinn Féin philosophy.⁶⁷

By 1908, successful campaigns had already been waged against the lack of a sufficient Irish content in the State-approved school curriculum, resulting in the introduction of the Irish language and Irish history as formal subjects in the national school system.⁶⁸ Marnie Hay has observed that the encouragement of youth participation in Gaelic games was another means of promoting a vital aspect of native culture to children. Likewise, nationalists were as convinced of sport's importance for

the development of a healthy body and moral character as the disciples of British athleticism. Moreover, participation in Gaelic games would build social bonds and help prepare the country's male youth, in particular, for their future role as virile soldiers and citizens of the nation.⁶⁹ As one newspaper contributor observed:

The boys of today will be the men of tomorrow. And it would not be natural to hope that the boys indifferent to the manly sports of their race will, in the future, become patriotic citizens – men capable of any great efforts in the National cause.⁷⁰

Nationalist newspapers would feed a torrent of propaganda which sought to instruct Irish children along patriotic lines. The radical mouthpiece, *Irish Freedom*, carried a children's column entitled 'Grianán na nÓg' (the Sunroom of Youth) written under the pseudonym 'Neasa'.⁷¹ Frequently, Neasa would run competitions inviting readers to submit short essays on a particular question or topic posed. In response to the question 'Are Irish Boys and Girls Justified in Playing Foreign Games?', the winner, Padraig S. Frínreac of Dublin, wrote:

native games are fitted for the temperament and physique of our people and belong to the national life and tradition of the Irish race ... They also strengthen national ideas and give to the young, wholesome minds and healthy bodies. On the other hand, foreign pastimes have been forced upon us ... They contaminate the minds of young people ... they induce them to renounce home and patriotism, and inspire some with contempt for their native land.⁷²

In this statement, we observe the influence of the increasingly intolerant rhetoric of the Irish-Ireland dogma towards anything perceived as un-Irish in the years leading up to 1916. By now, the GAA had firmly aligned itself within the greater cultural nationalist movement. Between 1901 and 1905, the Association passed a series of rules effectively banning any member who partook in what were now designated 'foreign games'.⁷³ The ideology of Irish-Ireland and the existence of the 'Ban' now supplied a powerful weapon to those who wished to promote Gaelic games at the expense of others. Over the next twenty years, an ideological war of supremacy would be fought across the media and sports fields of Ireland. In this conflict between advocates of native and 'foreign'

games, children's sport became a prominent battleground. For example, the establishment of a boys' soccer club in Cavan town in 1908 led to heated and bitter debate within the local press. Reacting to the news, one contributor declared that 'the youth of Cavan are tainted with the deadly poison of Anglicism' and blamed 'Intermediate and University students', the well-known 'promoters of soccer and hockey'.⁷⁴ Another denounced those Cavan youth who looked to soccer as 'empty headed dandies' who have 'mixed so much with the [British] Garrison that they believe the greatest luck that could have befallen them was to have been born Sasanach'.⁷⁵

In this frenzied atmosphere, it was inevitable that cultural nationalists would come into conflict with those elite schools seen as bastions of British games in Ireland.⁷⁶ In 1911, the GAA passed a motion condemning those schools which persist in fostering foreign sports and 'deny their students the right of playing national games' and appealed to all those 'interested in the promotion of Irish-Ireland ideals, to endeavour, by every means in their power, to persuade parents or their guardians to send their boys to colleges at which national games are played'.⁷⁷ In Cork, the Association became embroiled in an acrimonious dispute with local Catholic-run colleges. Due to their active promotion of rugby, the Cork GAA chairman, J.J. Walsh, accused the Christian Brothers in the city of being 'the biggest enemies of Gaelic culture in Cork'.⁷⁸ Walsh's memoir recounts how in 1911 he organised a 'threatening demonstration of Gaels, armed with camans' to appear outside the gates of the North Monastery school to force the Brothers to give up rugby in favour of Gaelic games.⁷⁹ In any case, rugby survived there, though by 1918, North Monastery was a school synonymous with the promotion of hurling.⁸⁰

If Christian Brothers' schools were sometimes lukewarm in their support of Gaelic games, that accusation could certainly not be made against Scoil Éanna. Patrick Pearse's institution, established in 1908, was seen by nationalists as the Irish-Ireland version of elite colleges like Blackrock.⁸¹ In his wholehearted promotion of Gaelic games and other physical activity within Scoil Éanna's curriculum, Pearse again demonstrated the impact British athleticism was having on Irish educational thinking. He firmly believed that by nurturing their health and fitness, boys could withstand the depravities and temptations of modern society.⁸² However, his was athleticism moulded for an Irish-Ireland purpose. Pearse chose the figure of Cúchulainn, the boy hurler turned legendary Gaelic warrior,

as the role model of Irish masculinity he wished to encourage among his pupils.⁸³ The cult of Cúchulainn was heavily promoted contributing to hurling, in particular, being prized as the school's main sporting passion. Though Pearse had little interest in the game itself, like many of his colleagues in the Gaelic League, he viewed hurling as a present-day link to the pure and ancient sport of the pre-Norman, Gaelic nobility.⁸⁴ Pearse would describe Scoil Éanna as 'emphatically a hurling school'. In the 1909 edition of *An Macaomh*, the Scoil Éanna magazine, he wrote:

Our boys must now be among the best hurlers and footballers in Ireland. Wellington is credited with the dictum that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. I am certain that when it comes to a question of Ireland winning battles, her main reliance must be on her hurlers.⁸⁵

Capitalising on the new patriotic spirit that was enflaming Irish public opinion in the years following Pearse's failed uprising in 1916, the GAA made a determined push to try and undercut the popularity of rival sports. In 1917, its Central Council issued letters to county boards to 'take advantage of the present feeling throughout the country ... with the object of wiping out soccer and other foreign games'.⁸⁶ Representations were made to the administrators of elite schools such as Blackrock and Terenure, and many now embraced Gaelic games, at least temporarily.⁸⁷

SPORT AND YOUTH MOVEMENTS

Outside of educational establishments, the decades surrounding Irish independence would see a range of organisations—religious, social and political—attempt to use sport as a means of proselytising Irish children for numerous designs. Religious youth organisations now spread to Ireland hoping to use sport to promote devotional observance among children, particularly those perceived as trapped amid the moral decay of modern urban life and its consequent effects on youth's moral fibre. At the same time, radical nationalist movements, targeted at children, began to heavily promote the sporting aspects of Ireland's Gaelic past as a means of awakening Ireland's youth towards their nationalist destiny.

One example of the former was the Boys Brigade founded in Glasgow in 1883 and open to Protestant boys aged twelve to seventeen years. The Brigade would become one of the largest youth movements in the UK

and 'companies' were established in Belfast and Dublin between 1888 and 1891.⁸⁸ Its stated aim was to promote the 'habits of obedience, reverence, self-respect and all that conduces to Christian manliness'.⁸⁹ The Brigade's goal was fundamentally religious and it used sport as a means of attracting working-class children to organised faith.⁹⁰ The Brigade's leadership intentionally sought to disseminate the ideology of athleticism among its members as a means of moral instruction.⁹¹ It promoted a range of sports and leisure activities but it would become most associated with the provision of soccer. It was granted honorary affiliation to the Leinster FA in 1892 and by 1905, there were twelve company teams playing in three Boys Brigade Leagues in Dublin, while soccer clubs attached to the organisation were also active in Belfast and Cork.⁹² Soccer was seen as both a useful distraction from other morally corrupting influences and a means of attracting members in the first place.⁹³ It was also praised as a sport which showed a boy 'how to take punishment cheerfully, to control his temper even when provoked, to keep his body in a good, healthy state'.⁹⁴ The Brigade's eulogising of the moral benefits of soccer was strongly underpinned by the ethos of amateurism now widely prevalent in Britain.⁹⁵ A former member, recalling how one inter-company game ended 18–0, bemoaned that 'such a score is surely more of a disgrace to the winning team than to the losers'.⁹⁶ Yet despite the moral values the Brigade hoped to instil through its promotion of team sport, Brendan Power has shown that the history of the Brigade's soccer leagues was frequently besmirched by accusations of spectator violence, rough play and a win at all costs mentality.⁹⁷ The arrival of the Boys Brigade in Dublin prompted the emergence of a Catholic equivalent, the Catholic Boys Brigade which was founded by Fr Benvenutus, a Capuchin priest, in 1894. Its aims were similar, hoping to 'suppress vice and evil habits of every kind' among working-class children. They also promoted sport as a means of attracting members and a popular annual sports day was hosted by its Rathmines company.⁹⁸

Like other Western European countries, Ireland would witness the rise of pseudo-military youth movements in the decade before the Great War. These organisations were both a manifestation of the cult of discipline, training and manliness that grew out of the anxiety about the coming war and a reaction to a widely perceived 'decadence' prevalent among the youth of Western societies.⁹⁹ Internationally, one of the most famous examples of this phenomenon was Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scout movement which was established in 1908.¹⁰⁰ Yet in an Irish

context, the most notable manifestation of this compulsion was the emergence of Na Fianna Éireann.¹⁰¹

Fianna Éireann was the brainchild of John Bulmer Hobson, who would become a leading member of both the IRB and the Irish Volunteers in the years before 1916. During his adolescence, Hobson had become a committed nationalist and staunch Irish-Irelander.¹⁰² As a member of the Tír na nÓg Gaelic League branch in Belfast, he became heavily involved with the hurling team they formed in July 1901.¹⁰³ Later that year, Hobson was elected as secretary of the first Antrim County Board but fell out with that body over its refusal to promote youth hurling.¹⁰⁴ In June 1902, he called a mass meeting of 300 local boys to establish the first iteration of Fianna Éireann, a junior league which would promote hurling but also the Irish language and history in order 'to make the boys sound nationally'.¹⁰⁵ However, a lack of finances and Hobson's other political commitments meant that Fianna Éireann soon lapsed.

In August 1909, Hobson teamed up with Constance Markievicz to launch a second, more militarised incarnation of Fianna Éireann in Dublin. Like the Boy Scouts, Fianna Éireann emphasised to its members the importance of values such as discipline, trust, obedience, loyalty, manliness and self-sacrifice.¹⁰⁶ Yet it displayed a far more militant ideology.¹⁰⁷ A recruiting notice from 1914 declared that: 'England has no business in this country at all ... Ireland belongs to the Irish ... The object of Fianna Éireann is to train the boys of Ireland to fight Ireland's battle when they are men'.¹⁰⁸ By 1916, it had units in nineteen counties and would reach a peak membership of over 30,000 in June 1917.¹⁰⁹

Fianna Éireann also promoted a strong cultural element, and its members were encouraged to participate in aspects of the revival movement through language, theatre, music and sport. This would cultivate their sense of a separate national identity.¹¹⁰ Aside from the promotion of physical fitness, a dedication to Gaelic games became a key part of its programme. Prospective recruits were told that physical culture, swimming, hurling and Gaelic football were all incorporated into the Fianna's training along with 'instruction in Irish and in Irish history [and] lectures on historical and literary subjects'.¹¹¹ In February 1914, an inter-section hurling league was started within the Dublin Battalion.¹¹² In March, several games were arranged to be played on the grounds of Scoil Éanna, where a troop of the Fianna had been set up in 1910.¹¹³

Fianna Éireann would go on to play a prominent role in the 1916 Rising with seven current or former members being killed.¹¹⁴

Irish girls were similarly targeted by nationalist youth movements. Inspired by the formation of the Girl Guides Association, a female version of the Boy Scouts, the Irish National Girl Scouts was established in Dublin and linked to the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), a Catholic fraternal society that supported the Irish Party's quest for Home Rule. The AOH's official journal, *The Hibernian*, declared it was as much the duty of Irish girls, 'to learn the art of war, so as to be able to fight for your country as it is for boys'. Aside from military instruction, the Irish National Girl Scouts' training included the study of Irish and the playing of camogie.¹¹⁵

YOUTH SPORT IN POST-INDEPENDENCE IRELAND

In the years following independence, Ireland's largest sporting organisations would make renewed efforts to bring their sports to the nation's youth. A flurry of new school and junior competitions would be inaugurated which would see more and more children exposed to formal sport at both school and community levels.

In the decade after the Civil War, the GAA established itself as the largest and most popular sporting organisation on the island. The role of teachers, especially those in national schools, proved vital for the expansion of Gaelic games across the education system at this point. Of crucial importance was the successful infiltration of Gaelic games into teacher training colleges like St Patrick's Drumcondra.¹¹⁶ In Donegal, for example, 50% of positions on the County Board were held by teachers at this time.¹¹⁷ In 1928, Cumann na mBunscol, a national federation of Primary Schools promoting Gaelic Games, was established.¹¹⁸ Following this, the GAA's Central Council approached the Department of Education to recommend that all new national schools should contain an acre of playing ground to encourage Gaelic games.¹¹⁹ The initiative failed and the Irish Government, like its British predecessor, displayed little interest in the active promotion of any sport in the education system in the decades after independence. What few schemes the State did sponsor were rudimentary in nature. From the 1920s, Free State Army instructors provided training in the basics of physical education at teacher training colleges, while an ad hoc programme of military drill sergeants visiting national schools to conduct classes was also carried out.¹²⁰

In the 1930s, basic in-service training in physical education for teachers was conducted in army barracks across the State. In 1938, the Committee on Physical Education in Schools, set-up by the Department of Education, issued a report which highlighted that the majority of Irish children were receiving no form of physical education and made several recommendations. However, a lack of State resources meant none of these were ever implemented.¹²¹ State intervention would not be attempted again until the 1960s.

In the absence of the State taking any leadership in sports provision, it would fall on Irish sporting organisations themselves to promote their games within Ireland's education system. In this, the GAA was particularly adept and thanks to its own voluntary initiatives, the Association would successfully infiltrate all levels of Irish education in the two decades after 1922. During the late 1920s, renewed efforts were made to spread the gospel of native games in post-primary education. In February 1927, Dr. Eamonn O'Sullivan established a Munster Schools and Colleges Board to oversee competitions for teams in the under seventeen- and under nineteen-year grades in both football and hurling. O'Sullivan was also instrumental in forming an All-Ireland Colleges Council to promote secondary school games on a national basis.¹²² By now camogie was also making steady progress, especially in schools run by female religious orders. In Ulster, a college camogie championship was inaugurated in 1929 while the establishment of a Brigidine Sisters Convent Camogie League in Leinster did much to popularise the sport among school goers.¹²³ Added impetus was given by the relaunch of the Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael in 1932 and camogie finally came to establish itself as a national game.¹²⁴

Yet in post-independent Ireland, the issue of schools promoting foreign games remained a heated point of contention within the GAA's ranks. In 1927, the Association's president, W.P. Clifford, insisted that:

Influence must be used to see that public grants do not go to schools that seek their inspiration, either on the playing fields of Eton or Rugby or Timbuctoo, and forget that there are games native to the soil of Ireland, evolved in her chequered and storied past, and inspired by the genius of her civilisation.¹²⁵

In Galway, the GAA succeeded in having the Ban enshrined in a County Council secondary school scholarship scheme ensuring that students

applying to those institutions promoting Gaelic games were the only ones eligible for the award. Despite criticism that such a move would only hurt children from poorer backgrounds and not the institutions in question, the following year the Dublin GAA passed a motion requesting the city's corporation to enforce a similar scholarship ban.¹²⁶ Notwithstanding such controversies, the GAA would come to dominate formal games at all school levels. By the mid-1940s, the Croke and Hogan Cup competitions were launched as All-Ireland contests for secondary schools in hurling and football, respectively.¹²⁷ The promotion of its games outside the schoolyard was also nurtured by the establishment of national underage competitions such as the minor All-Ireland Championships for players less than eighteen years of age in 1927.¹²⁸

Rugby Union, however, continued to be the sport of choice for many of Ireland's most prestigious schools. By 1929, there were fifty-nine affiliated to the IRFU.¹²⁹ The continuous growth of the game at school level was crucial to the overall expansion of the sport across the island in the 1920s. Rugby's progress was also greatly aided by a raft of new competitions introduced at county and provincial levels to cater for junior and underage boys' clubs which helped spread the game to many country towns.¹³⁰ Similarly, soccer's popularity among underage boys flourished in the country's larger urban centres where the game had usually become the sporting passion of choice among working-class communities. Following the formation of the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) in 1923, a plethora of new junior competitions was inaugurated. The cramped and inadequate housing conditions prevalent in inner-city areas like Dublin and Cork fostered the emergence of a vibrant street soccer culture which helped to reinforce the burgeoning appeal of the sport among the country's urban working class.¹³¹

CONCLUSION

During the decades under consideration, Irish children were exposed to formal sport in an unprecedented fashion. Individual educationalists of all hues, if not necessarily the State itself, considered sport an ideal medium for constructing a student's moral and virtuous character. Both Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and imperialist, saw the immense potential of athleticism to sculpt children's behaviour. Many elite Irish schools also looked to sport to inculcate children as future leaders of the British Empire. The promotion of team games like rugby was seen as a

perfect vehicle to achieve this end. Celebrating the city's school rugby culture in 1919, a writer in the *Belfast Newsletter* opined that rugby:

was perhaps the one great thing which the ancient Romans lacked. They had their public games... but what were they in comparison with this clean, manly, healthy sport which every boy was playing as hard as he knew how? Under the circumstances I think the next great power which endeavours to wipe out the British Empire will have much the same experience as the last.¹³²

Wrapped up in such notions was also a clear element of class prejudice. Rugby was understood as another demarcation of the exclusiveness of these institutions. By contrast, the increasing popularity of soccer among Ireland's urban working class led one Irish headmaster to describe the game as 'beneath contempt'.¹³³ Meanwhile, the tepid encouragement of Gaelic games in such schools was also seen by on-looking nationalists as branding as 'inferior the inherited manly pastimes in which our peasantry have exercised for ages'.¹³⁴ Proponents of Ireland's cultural revival naturally viewed native sports as one means of nurturing a diametrically opposed patriotism. Newspaper, as we have seen, played a prominent role in targeting children and promoting Gaelic games as part of an overall campaign to incubate among the next generation allegiance to the ideal of an Irish-Ireland.

A succession of youth organisations, both religious and political, was equally aware of the allure of sport to proselytise children. The Boys Brigade's promotion of soccer was a naked attempt at fostering religious devotion among Ireland's Protestant urban working-class youth. It spurred a range of Catholic copycats, one later example being the St Joseph's Boys Club. Formed by local clergymen in Waterford city in 1923, the society organised soccer and athletic competitions as a means of developing the physical and spiritual well-being of inner-city boys.¹³⁵ The manifestation of quasi-military youth groups in Ireland at this time, most notably Na Fianna Éireann, offered further opportunities to utilise sport as a method of political indoctrination. Fianna Éireann's encouragement of Gaelic games among its members played a prominent part in the organisation's holistic training of the future manhood of Ireland in the coming struggle for independence.

Once independence was achieved, the following decades witnessed an unparalleled expansion of children's sport across this island. Ireland's major sports bodies initiated a host of new competitions and

tournaments aimed at encouraging youth participation. In the twenty-six counties, the absence of any direct lead taken by the Irish Government itself meant the onus on promoting formal games within the Free State's ever-expanding education system would continue to be met by native sports organisations. In this, the GAA was particularly successful. During the 1920s, the Association gradually awoke from its previously lethargic embrace of children's sport and began to aggressively promote its codes within primary and post-primary education. By the 1940s, Gaelic games were the most widely played formal sports in the Irish school system. Despite this, rugby would continue to be seen as the sport of preference in the majority of Ireland's most exclusive schools. Yet in contrast to the voluntary work of these sporting organisations, the Irish State's record in encouraging youth sport at either school or community level in the decades following independence was distinctly underwhelming. The repercussions of this disinterest are still being widely felt today.

NOTES

1. William Joseph Barker, *Sports in the Western World* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 54–55.
2. Paul Rouse, *Sport and Ireland: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 17.
3. Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 141.
4. In Ireland, evidence of the link between education and sport goes back to at least 1620, when a school established in Newcastle, Co. Down made reference to a green space provided for students for archery and a local form of football. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 42.
5. Tom Hunt, *Sport and Society in Victorian Ireland, The Case Study of Westmeath* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2007), 45.
6. Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland, Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity Since 1884* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 140. The students of Rugby School drew up the first rules of the eponymous sport in 1846 and it was the products of the public school system that were instrumental in the formation of organisations such as the English Football Association (FA) and the English Rugby Union (RFU). Edmund Van Esbeck, *One Hundred Years of Irish Rugby: The Official History of the Irish Rugby Football Union* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1974), 6; Neil Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26.

7. J.A. Mangan defined athleticism as: 'Physical exercise taken, considerably and compulsorily, in the sincere belief ... that it was a highly effective means of inculcating valuable instrumental and impressive educational goals'. J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Routledge, 2000), 9.
8. *Ibid.*, 23.
9. Holt, *Sport and the British*, 91.
10. *Ibid.*, 81.
11. For an overview of the emergence of the cult of athleticism in the British school system, see Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The Public School Phenomenon* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), 145–154; Holt, *Sport and the British*, 74–86; Mangan, *Athleticism*, 13–28.
12. Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society, 1863–1915* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980), 12; Mangan, *Athleticism*, 27.
13. Tranter, *Sport and Society*, 58.
14. Holt, *Sport and the British*, 94.
15. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 126.
16. The novelist Charles Kingsley wrote that through sport, 'boys acquire ... self-restraint, fairness, honour ... all the "give and take" of life which stand a man in good stead when he goes forth into the world'. Cited in David G. McComb, *Sport in World History* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004), 75–76.
17. Tranter, *Sport and Society*, 58.
18. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Public School*, 147.
19. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 126.
20. Holt, *Sport and the British*, 139.
21. See the debate carried in, Gerry P.T. Finn, 'Trinity Mysteries: University, Elite Schooling and Sport in Ireland', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, no. 13 (2010): 2255–2287; Mike Cronin, 'Trinity Mysteries': Responding to a Chaotic Reading of Irish History', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 18 (2011): 2753–2760; Colm Hickey, 'The Evolution of Athleticism in Elite Irish Schools 1878–1914. Beyond the Finn/Cronin Debate', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 12 (2013): 1394–1417.
22. In addition, Ireland had 8649 primary schools. *1911 Census*, 42, 58.
23. Hickey, 'Athleticism', 1403.
24. Liam O'Callaghan, *Rugby in Munster A Social and Cultural History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 21.
25. For example, Thomas Kirkwood Hackett, who became a founding member of the Leinster Football Association, had been introduced to the game of soccer while studying at a public school in Dorset. Cormac Moore, *The Irish Soccer Split* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2015), 19.

26. Neal Garnham, *Association Football and Society in Pre-partition Ireland* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2004), 21; Senia Paseta, *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, Social Change and Ireland's Catholic Elite, 1879–1922* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), 40; Finn, 'Trinity', 2264.
27. *Castleknock Chronicle* (June, 1890), cited in Hickey, 'Athleticism', 1398.
28. *Tuam Herald*, October 7, 1911.
29. Paseta, *Before the Revolution*, 40.
30. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 122.
31. Hickey, 'Athleticism', 1408.
32. *Shamrock*, July 8, 1882.
33. Garnham, *Association Football*, 23.
34. George Briggs and Joe Dodd, eds., *Leinster Football Association 100 Years: Centenary Yearbook, 1892–1992* (Dublin: Leinster Football Association, 1993), 25; Moore, *The Irish Soccer Split*, 19.
35. Its desirability as the sport of choice of the upper and middle classes was evident when even students at Castleknock and Clongowes voted to abandon soccer in favour of the game between 1907 and 1909. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 215.
36. Finn, 'Trinity', 2264.
37. Hickey, 'Athleticism', 1401. A Connacht School's Senior Cup was inaugurated in 1913, while the Munster branch of the IRFU established the Munster Schools Cup and Munster Junior Cup in 1909. The competitions were dominated by teams from two of the elite Catholic Cork Colleges, Presentations Brothers College and Christian Brothers College. O'Callaghan, *Rugby in Munster*, 43.
38. *Belfast Newsletter*, March 27, 1919.
39. *Belfast Newsletter*, December 22, 1915.
40. D.H. Akenson, 'Pre-University Education, 1870–1921', in *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union 1: 1870–1921*, ed. W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 525.
41. As Liam O'Callaghan has shown, while winning sports trophies added to the prestige of these institutions, indulging in the anti-intellectual, moral glorification of games prevalent in British public schools, was a luxury that elite Catholic schools in Ireland could not afford. O'Callaghan, *Rugby in Munster*, 119.
42. Akenson, 'Pre-University Education', 525.
43. In Dublin in 1903, no national school had a sports field of any kind while it was also estimated that across Ireland a fifth of schools lacked a playground. Garnham, *Association Football*, 22.
44. *Westmeath Examiner*, September 5, 1903.
45. See *Tuam Herald*, April 17, 1909.

46. For example, at St Michael's College in Listowel, Co. Kerry, the clergy that ran the school promoted cricket among the students. Anthony J. Gaughan, *Listowel and Its Vicinity* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1973), 249.
47. *The Sixty-Seventh Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, Year 1900*, 8.
48. Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood* (Cambridge: Wiley Press, 2005), 29–30; Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004), 120.
49. Richard McElligott, *Forging a Kingdom: The GAA in Kerry, 1884–1934* (Cork: Collins Press, 2013), 28.
50. *Celtic Times*, May 14, 1887.
51. P.J. Devlin, *Our Native Games* (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1935), 52.
52. By 1911, there were fifty-three CBS secondary schools in Ireland. *1911 Census*, 56.
53. Barry M. Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland: The Christian Brothers and the Development of Irish Nationalism 1838–1921* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), 113.
54. For a detailed discussion of the hostility between the Catholic Church and the early GAA, see McElligott, *Forging a Kingdom*, 84–100.
55. Dónal McAnallen, *The Cups That Cheered, A History of the Sigerson, Fitzgibbon and Higher Education Gaelic Games* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2012), 16.
56. Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland*, 192. Meanwhile in Kerry, branches of the Gaelic League were promoting Gaelic football matches between national schools. *Kerry Sentinel*, May 17, 1905.
57. The meeting was chaired by the Rev. John Doody, the president of the prestigious St Kiernan's College, Kilkenny while Patrick Pearse, representing Scoil Éanna, was appointed vice-chairman of the Council. Dáiti de Búrca, 'Irish Colleges and National Pastimes', *Gaelic Athletic Annual and County Directory, 1909–1910* (Dublin, 1910), 74; T.F. O'Sullivan, *Story of the GAA* (Dublin: Printed at 49 Middle Abbey Street, 1916), 185.
58. P.J. Devlin, 'The Schools League', in *Games of the Gael: An Gaedéal Og, Dublin Schools League GAA*, ed. T. O'hAongusa (Dublin: An Gaedéal Og, 1923), 14.
59. Róna Nic Congáil, "'Looking on for Centuries from the Sideline": Gaelic Feminism and the Rise of Camogie', *Éire-Ireland* 48, no. 1 and 2 (2013): 169.
60. Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports* (London: Routledge, 2003), 45.
61. For example, the Irish Ladies Hockey Union was formed in 1894. Nic Congáil, 'Rise of Camogie', 170.

62. Regina Fitzpatrick, Paul Rosue, and Dónal McAnallen, 'The Freedom of the Field: Camogie Before 1950', in *The Evolution of the GAA, Ulaidh, Éire agus Eile*, eds. Donal McAnallen, David Hassan, and Roddy Hegarty (Belfast: Stair Uladh, 2009), 124.
63. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 323.
64. Nic Congáil, 'Rise of Camogie', 179. Camogie also became part of the curriculum of St. Ita's school, a short-lived girls school founded by Patrick Pearse in 1911 and modelled on Scoil Éanna. Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots*, 20.
65. De Búrca, 'Irish Colleges', 72–73, 76.
66. Nationalists like Patrick Pearse and Douglas Hyde were deeply concerned about the corrupting influence that mass produced imperial fiction, which targeted children and glorified the British imperial project, was having on the nation's youth. Typically, this amounted to the adventure stories carried in cheap, popular publications such as *The Boy's Own Paper* which were widely available and read in Ireland. Ciaran O'Neill, 'The Irish Schoolboy Novel', in *Children, Childhood and Irish Society, 1500 to the Present*, eds. Mary Luddy and James M. Smiths (Dublin, 2014), 83–84; Janette Condon, 'The Patriotic Children's Treat: Irish Nationalism and Children's Culture at the Twilight of Empire', *Irish Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (2000): 176.
67. Marnie Hay, 'This Treasured Island: Irish Nationalist Propaganda Aimed at Children and Youth, 1910–16', in *Treasure Islands: Studies in Children's Literature*, eds. Mary Shine Thompson and Celia Keenan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 36.
68. See David Fitzpatrick, 'Knowledge, Belief and the Irish Revolution: The Impact of Schooling', in *Schools and Schooling, 1650–2000: New Perspectives on the History of Education*, James Kelly and Susan Hegarty (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2017); David Fitzpatrick, 'The Futility of History: A Failed Experiment in Irish Education', in *Ideology and the Historians: Historical Studies XVII, Papers Read Before the Irish Conference of Historians*, ed. Ciaran Brady (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1991).
69. Marnie Hay, 'Children and the Irish Cultural Revival', UCD-scholarcast Series 12 (Spring 2015), 9.
70. *Anglo-Celt*, November 28, 1908.
71. *Irish Freedom* was a monthly paper produced by the IRB.
72. *Irish Freedom*, February, 1913.
73. In reality, 'foreign games' meant specifically the British sports of soccer, rugby, cricket and hockey which were now off limits to GAA members. See McElligott, *Forging a Kingdom*, 145–149.
74. *Anglo-Celt*, November 28, 1908.

75. *Anglo-Celt*, December 26, 1908.
76. The GAA's organ, the *Gaelic Athlete*, stated that in Ireland's elite schools, 'games controlled by the GAA are rigorously banned from the curriculum ... [students] may adopt the West British pastimes if they choose, or, ... they may voluntarily condemn themselves to a life of inaction so far as athletics are concerned'. *Gaelic Athlete*, September 13, 1913.
77. Croke Park Archive (CPA), Annual Congress Minutes 1911–1927: April 16, 1911.
78. J.J. Walsh, *Recollections of a Rebel* (Tralee: The Kerryman Ltd., 1944), 17.
79. Walsh, *Recollections of a Rebel*, 17.
80. Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland*, 193.
81. Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots*, 34.
82. *Ibid.*, 113.
83. *Ibid.*, 79–82.
84. Art Ó Maolfabhail, 'Hurling, An Old Game in a New World', in *Sport in the Making of Celtic Cultures*, ed. Grant Jarvie (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999), 154. Desmond Ryan, recalled that one his abiding memories as a student there was Pearse striding 'down the hurley field, his black gown flying in the wind, to encourage the Scoil Éanna players to beat some hostile team'. Brendan Walsh, *Boy Republic: Patrick Pearse and Radical Education* (Dublin: History Press Ireland, 2013), 134.
85. *An Macaomh* 1, no. 2 (Christmas, 1909), 17. In 1910, the school's senior hurling and football teams reached the finals of the Dublin Schools Championship, a remarkable achievement for a school established less than two years before.
86. *Kerry Sentinel*, October 13, 1917.
87. Seán Farragher, *Blackrock College, 1860–1995* (Dublin: Paraclete Press, 1995), 172; Fergus A. D'arcy, *Terenure College, 1860–2010: A History* (Dublin: Terenure College, 2010), 169–170.
88. Marnie Hay, 'An Irish Nationalist Adolescence: Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–1923', in *Adolescence in Modern Irish History*, eds. Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), 107.
89. Brendan Power, 'The Functions of Association Football in the Boys' Brigade in Ireland, 1888–1914', in *Leisure and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Leeann Lane and William Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 41.
90. *Ibid.*
91. For example, William Monk Gibbon, the founder of the Dublin Brigade, was a past pupil of the Royal School Armagh and argued that the Brigade 'created an esprit de corps which has made battalions the equivalent of public schools'. Power, 'Boys' Brigade', 45.

92. Briggs, *Leinster Football Association*, 60; David Toms, *Soccer in Munster: A Social History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2015), 15.
93. Power, 'Boys' Brigade', 46, 53.
94. *Dublin Evening Mail*, September 27, 1902.
95. Amateurism can be distilled into the simple principle that sport should be played for love not money and according to the concept of fair play—where one would not simply play by the rules of the game but also the spirit intended by those rules. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 141.
96. Power, 'Boys' Brigade', 49.
97. One game in Belfast ended with a mob invading the pitch, assaulting the rival goalkeeper, tearing down telephone poles and forcing one team to seek shelter in nearby houses from a barrage of sticks and stones. Power, 'Boys' Brigade', 51.
98. *Freeman's Journal*, September 19, 1902.
99. David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900–1922', in *A Military History of Ireland*, eds. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 382–383.
100. Marnie Hay, 'The Foundation and Development of Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–16', *Irish Historical Studies* 35, no. 141 (2008): 53.
101. I am very grateful to Dr. Marnie Hay for her help in highlighting sources for this particular section.
102. Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Tralee: The Kerryman Ltd., 1968), 3.
103. *Ibid.*, 14.
104. Bureau of Military History (BMH), Witness Statement (WS) 82: Bulmer Hobson, 1.
105. The organisation's name came from the legendary company of warriors headed by Fionn Mac Cumhail' and each club took the name of one of its members. BMH, WS 31: Bulmer Hobson, 1.
106. BMH, WS, 591: Eamon Martin, 2; Hay, 'The Foundation of Na Fianna Éireann', 53.
107. Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots*, 23. Fianna Éireann was the first nationalist organisation to begin open military training in Ireland and its members would soon become a byword for republican purity. Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918–1923* (London: Penguin, 2014), 317.
108. *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, October 10, 1914.
109. Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the Nationalist Movement in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 204.
110. Hay, 'Irish Cultural Revival', 11–12.
111. *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, October 10, 1914.

112. *Irish Volunteer*, February 14, 1914.
113. *Irish Volunteer*, March 14, 1914; Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots*, 126. Con Colbert, who was a prominent member of a special Fianna Éireann circle in the IRB, worked as the school's physical fitness master. BMH, WS 31: Bulmer Hobson, 5.
114. Hay, *Bulmer Hobson*, 123. In one of the first actions of the rebellion, a section of Fianna Éireann was detailed to blow up the explosives and ammunition store at the magazine fort in the Phoenix Park. They brought along several footballs and approached the entrance, pretending to be a football team going to practice in the park, before successfully rushing the sentries. BMH, WS 32: Garry Holohan, 58–59.
115. *The Hibernian*, July 17, 1915.
116. Commentating on the jubilee anniversary of the GAA's founding in 1934, the *Irish Press* noted, 'you'll find a national school teacher in every club—because the [teaching] colleges where these men are trained are truly Gaelic'. *Irish Press*, 'GAA Golden Jubilee Supplement', April 14, 1934.
117. Conor Curran, *The Development of Sport in Donegal, 1880–1935* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2015), 146.
118. M. Cronin, M. Duncan, and P. Rouse, eds., *The GAA: A People's History* (Cork: Collins Press, 2009), 257.
119. CPA, GAA/CC/01/04, GAA Central Council Minute Book 1929–1932: May 25, 1929.
120. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 316.
121. Ibid.
122. *Kerryman*, May 7, 1927. In January 1928, an Ulster Colleges Council was founded and Dr. Joseph MacRory, Bishop of Down and Connor, presented a trophy for its annual competitions. A year later, a Colleges Council was finally established in Connacht.
123. Fitzpatrick, et al., 'The Freedom of the Field', 129.
124. By 1935, camogie had 10,000 registered players on 423 teams in 28 counties. Cronin et al., *A People's History*, 328.
125. Letter by GAA President W.P. Clifford to the Annual Congress, April 16, 1927, quoted in Cronin et al., *A People's History*, 257.
126. Cronin et al., *A People's History*, 223.
127. Gerry Buckley, *Fifty Years of the Hogan Cup* (Nass: Leinster Leader, 2003), 11.
128. CPA, GAA Annual Congress Minute Books GAA/CC/01/04, Central Council Minute Books, 1928–1938: May 29, 1929.
129. Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 279.
130. O'Callaghan, *Rugby in Munster*, 51–53.

131. Toms, *Soccer in Munster*, 140.
132. *Belfast Newsletter*, March 27, 1919.
133. Garnham, *Association Football*, 24.
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