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NO *SHONEEN*: GAELIC GAMES AND THE ATHLETIC HERO IN THE IRISH PERIODICAL PRESS

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Abstract

Through the filter of the periodical literature intended for juveniles, especially boys, this thesis examines some facets of the Irish sporting culture as it emerged during the "Long Gestation" of Ireland's independence, i.e. the period prior to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, which witnessed the Gaelic cultural revival, the outbreak of the Easter Rising in 1916 and Sinn Féin's triumph over the Redmondites in the 1918 election. By focusing on this kind of publishing genre, indeed, it is possible to raise a complex network of images, symbols and discourses related to Irish sporting culture.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first is devoted to presenting the aims and objectives of this study, the literature review, the corpus being analysed, and the methodology. Textual analysis, if mostly focused on the fictional and non-fictional content of the story papers, extends to other bodies of writing: private correspondence, parliamentary debates, government reports, and periodical criticism. The juxtaposed analyses of texts of such a multifarious nature enabled me to understand the prevailing attitudes and socio-cultural mores of the time as well as the political and cultural implications of the rise of a sport system in Ireland.

The second part of *No* Shoneen*: Gaelic Games and the Athletic Hero in the Irish Periodical Press* thus details the steps that led up to the emergence of an Irish sport system and how Gaelic games came to be cultural signifiers pointing to Ireland's specificity at home and abroad. Moreover, in this section, I also discuss why the early twentieth century saw the emergence of what can be termed "Athletic Hero" as the last two chapters of this work expound the connection between the rise of the Irish sport system and the political and cultural investment on the youths of Ireland to demonstrate how Gaelic games assisted the Irish in the formation of a new ideal of boyhood. More specifically, whereas the fourth chapter focuses on the conception of the young athlete as the maker of Ireland's independence and the cornerstone of a new community – a conception revolving around the notion of sporting practice as a form of military preparedness –, the last chapter traces the contours of the idealised masculinity embodied by the young Gaelic athlete. The objective is to show how the athlete's vigorous body was aptly represented and extolled so as to counteract the stereotypical characterizations of the Irish as inferiors in need of Anglo-Saxon domination.

Abstract (Italian)

Attraverso il filtro della letteratura periodica destinata ai ragazzi, questa tesi esamina alcuni aspetti della cultura sportiva irlandese per come venne a delinearsi durante la "Lunga Gestazione" dell'indipendenza dell'Irlanda, ovvero nel periodo precedente alla creazione dello Stato Libero d'Irlanda nel 1922. Un periodo, vale la pena ricordarlo, che vide il rinascimento della cultura gaelica, lo scoppio della Sollevazione della Settimana Santa nel 1916 e il trionfo del partito Sinn Féin sui Redmonditi nelle elezioni del 1918. Concentrandosi su questo tipo di genere editoriale, infatti, è possibile far affiorare una rete complessa di immagini, simboli e discorsi relativi alla cultura sportiva irlandese.

La tesi è suddivisa in due parti. La prima è dedicata alla presentazione degli obiettivi di questo studio, dello stato dell'arte, del corpus preso in esame e della metodologia. L'analisi testuale, seppur in maggior parte rivolta ai testi di *fiction* e agli articoli dei periodici, si estende ad altri generi di scrittura, quali le corrispondenze private, i dibattiti parlamentari, i rapporti governativi. La giustapposizione di testi dalla natura così multiforme permette di cogliere gli atteggiamenti prevalenti e le usanze socioculturali dell'epoca, nonché le implicazioni politiche e culturali insite nell'ascesa del sistema sportivo in Irlanda.

La seconda parte di *No* Shoneen*: Gaelic Games e Athletic Hero nella Irish Periodical Press* invece, descrive nel dettaglio le tappe che hanno portato all'emergere di un sistema sportivo irlandese e come i giochi di matrice gaelica divennero significanti culturali, segnalando la specificità dell'Irlanda in patria e all'estero. Questa sezione tratta altresì delle ragioni sottostanti la comparsa, all'inizio del Ventesimo secolo, di una figura che si potrebbe definire dell'"Atleta-Eroe". Gli ultimi due capitoli di questo lavoro, infatti, espongono la connessione tra l'ascesa del sistema sportivo irlandese e l'investimento politico e culturale sui giovani irlandesi per dimostrare come i giochi gaelici aiutassero gli irlandesi nella formazione di un nuovo ideale di fanciullezza. Più specificamente, laddove il quarto capitolo si concentra sulla concezione del giovane atleta come artefice dell'indipendenza irlandese e pietra angolare di una nuova comunità – una concezione a sua volta imperniata sulla nozione di pratica sportiva come forma di preparazione militare –, l'ultimo capitolo delinea i contorni di tale mascolinità idealizzata e incarnata dal giovane atleta gaelico. L'obiettivo è mostrare come il corpo vigoroso dell'atleta sia stato opportunamente rappresentato ed esaltato in modo da neutralizzare le caratterizzazioni stereotipate degli irlandesi come inferiori e "bisognosi" del dominio anglosassone.

I

OVERVIEW: PERIODICAL LITERATURE AS A "WINDOW" INTO IRISH SPORTING CULTURE

I.a Aims and Objectives

This thesis provided me with a significant opportunity to illustrate the pervasiveness of periodical literature intended for juveniles, particularly boys, in both British and Irish societies between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I sought to examine not the canonical works of British and Irish literatures, nor even the literary periodicals exclusively directed to the better-educated reader, but, above all, the periodicals that informed, amused and often instructed young people across all the segments of the two societies at the turn of the century. Moreover, my concern has also been to trace the links between highbrow literature and popular expression in the decades before and after the 1916 Easter Rising, and to situate the production of the periodicals here analysed in the wider social and cultural context out of which they came. In what follows, I have tried to see the periodicals not in splendid isolation, but as products of their age.

Certainly, by focusing on this section of the editorial and literary production, I was able to demonstrate the ubiquitous nature of periodical literature at the time; more importantly, however, the juxtaposed analysis of these texts enabled me – and, hopefully, the reader of this work – to understand the prevailing attitudes and socio-cultural mores of the time, and the political and cultural implications of the rise of a sport system in both countries, with particular attention devoted to the revival of the Gaelic games in Ireland. Specifically, through the filter of the periodical literature intended for juveniles, this thesis examines some facets of the Irish sporting culture as it emerged during the "Long Gestation"[1] of Ireland's independence, i.e. the period prior to the establishment of the Irish

[1] I have drawn the notion of "Long Gestation" from the work by Patrick Maume *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life 1891-1918* (1999), where he discusses how the nationalist tradition of the 1850s re-invented itself at the turn of the century by giving birth to the Irish-Ireland movement of the 1890s. In turn, Maume had retrieved the phrase from a passage in William Butler Yeats's autobiography. See Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation. Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1999.

Free State in 1922, which witnessed the Gaelic cultural revival, the outbreak of the Easter Rising in 1916 and Sinn Féin's triumph over the Redmondites in the 1918 election.[2]

Textual analysis, if mostly focused on the fictional and non-fictional content of the juvenile periodicals, extends to other bodies of writing such as private correspondences, parliamentary debates, and government reports. Yet the primary sources are the story papers, which formed a section of the literary and editorial production enjoying considerable success in the period here examined, both in Britain and Ireland. The following sub-chapters explore the extent of their success and the productivity of an analysis based on this genre.

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If the study of Irish periodical literature is still in its infancy,[3] much ink has been spilt on the profusion of periodical literature in Britain since the 1850s. With regard to periodical literature intended for juveniles, Kelly Boyd has observed that throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the imagination of thousands of boys and girls was kindled by formulaic stories, such as school-stories and detective stories, which were the most widely read and rapturously remembered. Generation after generation, they sat enthralled, reading, for instance, of the exploits of young builders of the Empire fresh from public schools, as they colonize and civilize indigenous populations at the farthest outposts of the British Empire. Often, "a facet of publishing which the world of arts and letters seldom considered worthy of notice", juvenile periodicals were, in fact, a kind of "literature that boys of all classes read at some point in their lives". The boys' story paper formed the central core of youngsters' reading from the middle of the nineteenth century to the late 1930s.[4]

Sales figures rocketed upwards at the end of the Victorian Age, when the magazines could rely on a capillary distribution. The success of periodical literature, still unthreatened by the establishment of the comic book, and the rise of the related British mass-market were

[2] The Redmondites were the supporters of John Edward Redmond (1856-1918), an Irish MP in the British House of Commons, and his Irish nationalist policies, particularly with reference to his ultimate support of the Home Rule Bill of 1912. In the months prior to the First World War, indeed, the British Liberal government had decided to concede Home Rule (a limited measure of self-government) to Ireland: however, even if the Home Rule Act was passed, it was eventually suspended for the duration of the global conflict. Towards the end of the war, the Redmondites faded into obscurity, while the separatist party Sinn Féin began to attract more support: the former's decline culminated with the disappearance of the Redmondite Nationalists at the general election of November 1918.

[3] This aspect is discussed in the section entitled "Periodization and Literature Review".

[4] Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855-1940*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2003, p. 3-7.

supported by mechanical innovations, advances in printing technology, parliamentary acts and high levels of literacy among the youth.

First of all, juvenile periodicals benefited from the mechanisation of paper-making,[5] particularly from technological innovations such as the introduction of Linotype printing in the 1880s.The production of cheaper paper was in turn accompanied by developments in the railway distribution and by the flourishing of retail trades, which had a material impact on the great profusion of newspapers and periodicals in the late Victorian Age. In *English Children and their Magazines 1751-1945*, Kirsten Drotner writes of the boom in the editorial market, connecting it to the expansion in retail trades: the latter "created a national network of local tobacconists, sweet stalls and corner shops to which adolescents swarmed on their way home from school or work to get their Wednesday or Saturday weeklies".[6]

Not only did technical conditions evolve radically throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but, in the 1850s, many stumbling blocks at the financial level were removed. If, in the first half of the nineteenth century, heavy taxation made publication hard to sustain and nearly ruined dozens of periodicals' proprietors, the removal of the advertising duty in 1853 and the repeal of the duty on paper in 1855 prompted a new crop of papers and periodical publications flourished.[7]

Another crucial factor was the increasing literacy among the masses, encouraged by a couple of parliamentary acts. The passing of progressive legislation in the 1870s, the Forster Education Act of 1870 in Britain, and the Intermediate Education Act of 1878 in Ireland helped create over one million new places in schools across Britain and Ireland.[8] The period stretching from the 1890s to the inter-war years was a time when literacy was very high among the young, who gobbled up the Amalgamated Press papers like the *Gem*, *Magnet*, and

[5] In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the production of paper was still accomplished mostly by hand. This meant the hiring of skilled and well-paid artisans.

[6] Kirsten Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines, 1751-1945*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988.

[7] Michael Harris, "London's Local Newspapers: Patterns of Change in the Victorian Period", in Laurel Brake, Aled Jones and Lionel Madden (eds.), *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1990, pp. 106-107. Harris, for instance, reports the case of the Greenwich-based *Kentish Mercury*, which saw arrears of advertising duty almost ruining the proprietor and the seizure of much of his property.

[8] John Springhall, "'Disseminating Impure Literature': The Penny Dreadful Publishing Business Since 1860", *The Economic History Review*, vol. 47, no. 3, 1994, p. 567. William Edward Forster's Education Act of 1870 established in Great Britain the elements of a primary school system, by providing a framework for the education of those aged five to ten and ensuring that there was a school in every neighbourhood. In Ireland, however, Forster was mainly noted for his repression of the radical Land League, which won him the nickname "Buckshot Forster."

Union Jack.[9] It was then, indeed, that a new crop of periodicals appeared along with an ever expanding readership.

Supported by increasing literacy after the promulgation of the Education Acts, in the early 1880s, over 900 new juvenile books were published annually and dozens of periodicals competed for the cultural allegiance of the youngsters. The end of the 1870s witnessed a boom in the number of periodicals intended for juveniles. Patrick Dunae observes that there were only fifty-nine such periodicals in 1874, while none was recorded in 1863; numbers increased considerably to 100 in 1884 and reached 218 in 1910.[10] For instance, in the early 1890s, the business of the publishing magnate Alfred Harmsworth and his brothers expanded considerably, as several magazines for boys were launched in the span of few years: *The Wonder* appeared in 1892, and was followed at a brief interval by *The Marvel* and *Union Jack*.

At the time, the British mass-market of periodical literature catered for all the sections of British society, including the humblest. According to John Springhall, "fortunes were certainly made and lost by London's publishers of cheap juvenile fiction, suggesting the scale and significance of a business catering specifically to the popular end of the juvenile market".[11] In reality, boys from both the working and upper classes were omnivorous readers, who liked a wide variety of readings from school stories to penny dreadfuls. As observed by George Orwell, for instance, working-class boys enjoyed reading school stories, a sub-genre originated by Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Day* in 1857: set in expensive boarding schools, these stories featured young protagonists who were moulded by the practices and ethos of public schools such as Eton and Rugby.[12] Therefore, school stories provided working-class boys with the opportunity to fantasise about a microcosm – that of boarding schools – which had no connection to their reality. The readership of stories set in expensive boarding schools was not confined to the upper and

[9] The Amalgamated Press, the largest periodical publishing company in the world between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was founded by Alfred Harmsworth (1865-1922) in 1901. Harmsworth was a British publishing magnate who also owned the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*. Having based his business on cheap popular periodicals, he came to exercise vast influence over British popular opinion in the Edwardian Age.

[10] Patrick A. Dunae, *British Juvenile Literature in an Age of Empire: 1880-1914*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Victoria University of Manchester, 1975, p. 12.

[11] John Springhall, "'Disseminating Impure Literature'", cit., p. 582.

[12] In the essay "Boys' Weeklies", George Orwell recalls when he presented some English soldiers of the French Foreign Legion with a batch of magazines of multifarious nature: the servicemen picked out the *Gem* and *Magnet* first, two periodicals which proposed an inordinate amount of stories set in boarding schools and with stereotyped heroes. See George Orwell, 'Boys' Weeklies', in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*. *Vol. I: An Age Like This 1920-1940*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970, pp. 505-531.

middle classes but extended to the humblest: the success of this kind of stories transcended class boundaries. In this respect, however, school-stories were not an exception.

Although *Tom Brown's School Days* provided periodicals' authors with the key to popularity, during the Victorian and Edwardian Ages the readers' choice was not restricted to the heirs of Thomas Hughes. The Amalgamated Press papers like the *Gem*, the *Magnet*, and *Union Jack* were also very appealing to both middle- and working-class readers, attracted by their adventure stories, both entertaining and comforting, in which fabulous heroes – who did not come from the aristocracy – never faltered in their goals, showing off outstanding athletic prowess.[13] Interestingly, the Amalgamated Press papers, along with the respectable variety of fiction represented by *Boys of England*, *Chums* or *The Captain*, were meant to counterbalance the debasing effects of Edwin J. Brett's penny dreadfuls that featured heroes like Dick Turpin[14] who, "cheerfully amoral, openly defied authority and revelled in bloodshed". Hence, in Britain, the penny dreadfuls "were accused by school teachers and local magistrates of inciting boys to commit crimes".[15]

Finally, this heterogeneous paper landscape, formed by less or more respectable magazines, was completed by the successful *The Boy's Own Paper*. Born in 1879 as a counterweight to the noxious popularity of penny dreadfuls, it jettisoned any recourse to sensationalism and 'immoral' themes, opting for a firmly moral and Christian tone. Under its first editor, George Hutchinson, it quickly became the most influential juvenile periodical ever produced, with circulation figures rocketing to at least one and a quarter million weekly copies. The *Boys' Own Paper* had the largest circulation of any juvenile periodical, also surpassing many of its popular adult counterparts of the time.[16]

As evidenced by the allegations of corruption against the penny dreadfuls, the reading habits of boys in the Victorian and Edwardian Ages are a source of interest not only for the contemporary researcher. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, intellectuals and politicians were concerned that the youths would read the right things – that they would turn their back to the morally debasing penny fiction – so as to learn the prevailing attitudes and socio-cultural mores of their time and meet the demands of

[13] Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain*, cit., pp. 128-129.
[14] The most popular "penny dreadful" in Britain during the Victorian Age was Edward Vile's *Black Bess*, a highwayman novel titled after Dick Turpin's favourite horse which was first published between 1863 and 1865 and constantly reissued up to the 1890s.
[15] John Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1986, p. 128.
[16] Patrick Dunae, *British Juvenile Literature*, cit., p. xiii.

becoming a responsible citizen.[17] Schoolmasters, politicians and intellectuals were pretty aware that the periodical press could possess a high educational value and so spurred the youths to buy suitable reading material that was imbuing them with the qualities necessary for leadership in the fields of the business world, the church, the army and, of course, the British Navy.

Worthier magazines such as the *Boy's Own*, *Paper Chums* or *The Captain* (1899-1924) – jammed full of adventure tales, school stories, detective thrillers and science fiction, interspersed with the occasional non-fiction feature – aimed not only to entertain the average boy, but also to provide him with a specific world view. The fictional and non-fictional content of British magazines was indeed reflective of the prevailing concerns and ethos of their time. With regard to formula literature, John Cawelti has argued that it is also revealing as a collective cultural product which effectively articulates a pattern of fantasy acceptable to the groups who enjoy it, and which evolves with society.[18] The very same might be stated in relation to magazines of the *Boys' Own Paper* kind, which had to reflect dominant values, the ethos and the concerns of this class and those who aspired to join it.[19]

Therefore, the periodical press intended for juveniles is a rich source for understanding the ideas and attitudes of the society that had produced them; we can glimpse the lineaments of the societal cosmology in the magazines' pages. And among the first to notice this "analytical" potential was the writer George Orwell, who regarded the boys' story papers as worthy of critical analysis and comment. In March 1940, Orwell published, in the literary monthly *Horizon*, an article that sparked a lively debate on popular culture in Britain. Its title was "Boys' Weeklies" so as to immediately point out the article's subject, i.e. those magazines which "are the best indication of what the mass of English people really feels and thinks. Certainly nothing half so revealing exists in documentary form".[20] Of the multifarious paper landscape, Orwell decided to discuss closely two weeklies, *Gem* and

[17] Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World*, Harper Collins Academic, London, 1991, p. 19. The Victorian soon recognised the influence juvenile fiction could have on its readership. For instance, Edward Salmon, a contributor to the *Fortnightly Review* who wrote extensively on the juvenile publishing connection, in 1886 put emphasis one the that "it is impossible to overrate the importance of the influence of such a supply [of fiction] on the national character and culture. Mind, equally with body, will develop according to what it feeds on; and just as the strength or weakness of a man's muscle depends on whether he leads a healthy or vicious life, so will the strength or weakness of his moral sense largely depend upon whether he reads in his youth that which is pure or that which is foul". The quotation from Edward Salmon, "What Boys Read," *Fortnightly Review*, February 1886 is reported in Stephanie Olsen, *Raising Fathers, Raising Boys: Informal Education and Enculturation in Britain, 1880-1914*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, McGill University, 2008, pp. 143-144.

[18] John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance. Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1976.

[19] Michael Flanagan, "For the Triumph of the Patriot Arms", cit., p. 2.

[20] George Orwell, "Boys' Weeklies", cit., p. 530.

Magnet. Both of them were deplored by the author of *Animal Farm*, who shed light on their racism, classism and their undeniably conservative tone, which should have made them an unsuitable reading for the working-class young men who nonetheless gobbled them up in the breaks between work. Orwell lamented the conservative political stance, redolent of the world before 1914, which had been adopted by the papers' editors and contributors. In an effort to reach extreme synthesis, he maintained that the ethos there conveyed could be best summed up in the sentence "nothing ever changes, and foreigners are funny".[21]

Thus, in the wake of Orwell's article, the present thesis employs the juvenile periodical press as a filter to reveal the ethos obtaining in a certain period as well as to grasp the deeper structures of concurrent events and phenomena, with a particular attention paid to the emergence of a modern sport system.

A terminological question should be raised at this point. By the term 'sport' I do not mean 'hunting', 'shooting' and 'fishing' as a person of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries England would say if required to provide a definition. Rather, here 'sport' is intended as highly structured athletic activities which are regulated and standardised by a complex body of rules and federations; furthermore, one of the defining characteristics of sport as intended here is equality of participation opportunity, meaning that virtually everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy sport if desired and that the opportunity to participate in sport should be the same for all contestants; in brief, what the sport historian Allen Guttmann[22] defined as "modern sports" as opposed to "Greek sports", "Roman sports" and "medieval sports".

Guttmann's "modern sports" constituted the British sports system of the nineteenth century, which would be diffused across Europe and the whole world, also becoming a common fictional and non-fictional theme in the juvenile periodical press. As sort of evidence of the popularity of sport as a theme, it should be taken into account that the very

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[21] *Ibid*., cit., pp. 505-531. About the stereotypical images of foreigners and inherent racism of these representations, Orwell, among other things, stated that "in the *Gem* of 1939 Frenchmen are still Froggies and Italians are still Dagoes". In the same line, the critic Louis James later stated that since "not only was the Victorian boy better than any of his ancestors, he was superior to any other human race in the nineteenth century", juvenile periodical literature was thick with racial stereotypes: "Russians are treacherous and loutish; Spaniards are cruel […]. Those with dark skins are grouped in a miscellaneous category of 'savages,' embracing Red Indians, South Sea Islanders, African Negroes, Indians, and Australian aborigines. Generally they are treacherous and 'by nature and instinct, very cruel.' They can be killed without compunction." See Louis James, "Tom Brown's Imperialist Sons," *Victorian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1973, p. 91.

[22] Allen Guttmann is credited with the first attempt at a systematic classification of the recreational experiences involving physical and competitive activities between humans: central to his disquisition are indeed the differentiations between play, games, contests and modern sports. In particular, he pinpointed seven characteristics that are peculiar to 'modern sports', including the emergence of a need for secularism, codification, the establishment of societies responsible for organising and regulating sporting practice – all elements which were underpinned also by a drive for rationalisation and specialisation. See Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978.

first article of the opening number of the *Boy's Own Paper*, published on 18 January 1879, was written by Talbot Baines Reed (under the pen name 'Old Boy') and was entitled *My First Football Match*. Analogously, the fifth article was an account by Captain Matthew Webb of his own sporting feats – "How I Swam the Channel" is the article's title.[23]

Certainly, the wealth of stories centred on sporting themes mirrors the effects of the Victorian Leisure Revolution, which spawned the birth of many sporting organisations in Britain and throughout the Empire. At the turn of the century, the most popular modern sports – rugby, cricket, rowing, boxing, yachting, skating, lawn tennis, badminton, croquet, lacrosse – had their rules codified by specific national associations, which were also charged with the planning of competitions.

The rise of modern sports has been frequently linked with the mid-Victorian reform of the English public school, a phenomenon, in turn, which had been initially associated with Thomas Arnold's office as headmaster at Rugby from 1827 to 1839 and now generally interpreted as the upper- and middle-classes' response to Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown Schooldays* (1857). In fact, through the celebratory filter of A. P. Stanley's *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D.D.* (1844) and Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Rugby School's headmaster has long been extolled as the man who rescued his own institution and the other public schools in Britain from the swamp of barbarism that was the legacy of Georgian lassitude, by making the practice of sport an indispensable element of the school curriculum.[24] Yet this was largely a myth. Thomas Bamford, among others, has demonstrated that the innovations effected by Dr Arnold were not radical; nor did they impact on other schools.[25] His contribution to the birth of modern sport and the British sport system was likewise very limited.

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[23] Cf. *The Boy's Own Paper*, edited by J. Macaulay, 18th January 1879, p. 1. "My first Football Match" tells the story of young Mr Adams, who is unexpectedly picked to play football against the Craven team in a tournament among schools. The relevance and appeal of sport to young readers in the Victorian and Edward Ages is further evidenced by the almost full-page illustration on the cover page which depicts a moment of the match: for sure, the illustration was meant to catch the attention of potential readers at the newsagent's. The cover of the first issue can be seen online at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/18/BoysOwnPaperIssue1Jan1879.jpg. Instead, with regard to Captain Matthew Webb who made himself famous by swimming across the English Channel in 1875, his own was such a household name that, in 1897, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum showed a model of him. Fourteen years later, the statue of Webb was joined by another Channel swimmer, Burgess, who also sold the museum the goggles, hat and drinking cup. Sport was indeed so central to the life of Victorian people that sporting tableaux as well as dioramas about individual sporting achievements began to be noticed at Tussaud's, a further evidence of the growing popularity of sports at the time, For further information, see Pamela Pilbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2006.

[24] James E. Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991, pp. 65-66.

[25] Thomas W. Bamford, *Thomas Arnold*, Cresset Press, London, 1960, pp. 78-79.

If Arnold's "mens sana in corpore sano" has to be intended, the model proposed by Hughes was that of the self-reliant boy, tamed into submission to Christian principles and extolled for his athletic prowess.[26] It was the popularity of Hughes's bestseller that ultimately gave impetus to the gradual introduction of compulsory games playing in the curricula of English public schools in the years between 1860 and 1880. Up to the mid-1850s, games playing within the school system was the prerogative of few institutions, those whose headmasters had realised the great potential of organised games as a means for supervising and controlling the most undisciplined students. In 1853, for instance, the headmaster of Harrow patronised the establishment of the Harrow Philathletic Club with the intention of "promoting among the members of the school an increased interest in games and other manly exercises", whereas stone-throwing had always been the principal leisure occupation of the boys. In the very similar year, to counter disciplinary problems among his pupils, the new headmaster of Marlborough, G.E.L. Cotton, promised to include games into the formal curriculum, because "a civilised, out-of-door life in the form of cricket, football and wholesome sports took the place of poaching, rat hunting and poultry stealing".[27] Yet it was Hughes who made organised sports appealing, thus contributing to the systematic spread of games playing and the pre-eminence of athleticism in the English schools.

Given that, the focus on sporting representations in the juvenile papers, aimed at a transitional adolescent-adult stage, helps to bring to the surface and investigate the complex network of images, symbols and discourses related to this systematic spread of games and the values underlying it. School stories, for instance, shed light on the reasons underlying the cult of sports in the public school environment.

It is well known that the Victorians and Edwardians did not question the pivotal role of public school in safeguarding the Empire. For instance, John Evelyn Wrench, the founder of the English Speaking Union, was deeply convinced of the contribution of public schools to staff the administrative and military classes, for he wrote of his schooldays in the late 1890s that "It was evidently our job to run the world, and in running it Eton was going to play a big part […]. To my mind the highest cause to which a young Briton could consecrate himself was the extension of the British Empire's area and influence".[28] But what is intriguing about juvenile periodicals is the fact that they illuminate the educational power attributed to the sporting practice at school. Within the public school context, the cult of

[26] John Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960*, cit., p. 26.
[27] Quoted in John Springhall, *Coming of Age*, cit., pp. 117-118.
[28] Quoted in John Springhall, *Coming of Age*, cit., pp. 38-39.

sports fostered a patriotic devotion to duty and service among the youths, thus playing a crucial role in the forgery of new recruits for the military cantonments and colonial outposts in the far corners of the Empire. School-stories cast light on the fact that games were justified ideologically, as training grounds in the education of military and administrative leaders for Britain's expanding empire. Britain's colonial exploits in far off lands posited the need for individuals trained to endure long extenuating journeys, physical labour, tropical climate and whatever physical-demanding work they were required to do at the outposts of the Empire.

However, by focusing on story papers intended for juveniles, it is possible to illuminate other aspects concerning the pivotal role played by sport in the public school curriculum. Through the filter of juvenile magazines, one can better understand the reasons and the modality underpinning the rise of a distinct type of combative masculinity that became prevalent and normative during the heyday of the British Empire. Through the filter of juvenile periodicals, the *fin-de-siècle* obsession with boyhood is exposed and revealed. As Michael Flanagan observed, at the turn of the twentieth century, many kinds of writing, from the popular juvenile weeklies to parliamentary reports, extolled boys of all classes as the heroes of their day. Fighting fit, morally upright, and proudly patriotic, these young heroes were bound to glorious imperial deeds such as civilizing a savage world.[29] The papers communicated, both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, numerous representations of this *homo sportivus*, perceived as an outstanding exemplar of ideal Britishness.

Indeed the ideological justification of games in the school contexts was played out also at a moral level. Besides being instrumental to the physical development of soldiers and civil servants, sport-games were vehicles for the inculcation and expression of the ideal of manliness. Since sport was almost a male preserve in those days, it could but play a role in the production and reproduction of ideals of masculine identities. Fighting or competing was the opportunity to learn, and later on display, the gentlemanly virtues that would gain a young man the highest praise and honour among the other members of his own group. It was the opportunity to learn the desired and desirable qualities in a young man that British society identified as crucial for its own survival.

Sport games were thus training grounds promoting a moral development. Britain and the Empire required devotion and loyalty, and by participating in school games, the youths

[29] Michael Flanagan, "For the Triumph of the Patriot Arms – The Christian Brothers, *Our Boys* and Militant Nationalism in Irish Popular Culture, 1914–1922", in Karen Vandevelde (ed.), *New Voices in Irish Criticism 3*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2002, p. 45.

learned these desirable qualities. The loyalty to a sporting team, usually expressed through rhetorical vigour, was the logical complement or precursor to other kinds of group or institutional loyalties, among which the loyalty owed to England and the Empire was paramount.[30] The first impulse to the rise of modern sports in British public schools originated from the need for fostering those qualities deemed crucial for the survival of society, while suppressing those undesirable. Thus, the athletic curricular activities served a twofold purpose: first, they allow for the regulation of the behaviour of public school boys; second, they enhanced character building in the socially sanctioned lines.

At the same time, the papers promulgated the figure of the muscular Christian as representative of a peculiar "ethos". Victorian norms of masculine identity were undergoing a crucial shift, which was marked by the advent and diffusion of the so-called "muscular Christianity". Muscular Christianity was regarded as the contribution of Charles Kingsley, who was celebrated as "the great Apostle of the Flesh". Muscular Christianity, the "distinctive philosophy" of Charles Kingsley, identified the body as a central locus of value within its amalgam of athletic and devotional rhetoric. More specifically, the term "muscular Christianity" was first coined by Sandars in his 1857 review of Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago* (1857) – published in *The Saturday Review* – in which he provides a list of the defining characteristics of muscular Christianity, intended as a compound of religious certainty, physical prowess and the ability to shape the world around oneself.[31] The Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny of 1857 had raised the spectre of a weakened Britain and Britons, which Kingsley tried to dispel by offering a model physical prowess and hardiness combined with esprit de corps and devotion. Rephrasing a famous Latin phrase, it might be said that muscular Christians believed that a *mens sana* could only thrive in a *corpore sano*. The muscular model soon appealed to the expanding public school population. Its diffusion was steady and fast, because Kingsley's masculine ideal was soon related to – and made to sustain – the Victorian cult of athleticism and the imperial rule.[32]

These male models of *homo sportivus* were propagated all around the world through the spread of organized games as well as through the wide circulation of juvenile papers promoting those ideals. Within the framework of the British Empire, and considering the

[30] Cf. Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World.*

[31] Cf. Donald E. Hall, *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

[32] For in-depth analyses of "imperial, athletic masculinities", see Jonathan Rutherford, *Forever England: Reflections on Masculinity and Empire*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1997; John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire*, Harlow, Pearson Longman, 2005; Patrick F. McDevitt, "*May the Best Man Win": Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880–1935*, Palgrave, New York and Basingstoke, 2004.

ideology underpinning it, the diffusion of both sport and, by extension of the male ideals, were not devoid of significant political implications. As McDevitt justly noted,

> sport was more than just a mirror to society, because it was also an active engine in the creation and preservation of power relationships […] For the British administrators of the Empire who did so much to bring their games to the world, the value of the games was to be found in the moral lessons they taught. By spreading these games, they held that they were spreading civilization".[33]

Sport became a weapon in the armoury of cultural imperialism, as the values of British society were exported together with the diffusion of organised sport – values put forward as ideal, as desirable. However, the ability to fully learn these values was attributed to the racial composition of the Anglican race: in turn, this aspect meant that the characteristics and values imparted on the sport-fields remained fundamentally unattainable for the colonial subjects.[34]

Since a rugby or cricket match could make the British face their subjects on the field, for the former people sport could also become the perfect occasion to display their own virtues and qualities to the detriment of the latter. Indeed, the "Others", the colonial subjects, were often the convenient counterfoil for this display, insofar as the "Others" were attributed with characteristics which were antonymic to the virtues the British were said to possess. If the British *homo sportivus* was fit, boldly masculine and self-disciplined, the "Other" could be effeminized or infantilised. For instance, the British often depicted the Irish as less manly, childlike, or hot-tempered, as a distinct and inferior race stuck at an intermediate stage between barbarism and civilization.

What British juvenile papers cannot reveal, however, is the fact that colonial subjects, including the Irish, could developed an athletic culture and related athletic masculinities as a response and negotiation to the British models. The values as well as the stereotypes propagated by the British could be negotiated, contested and reproduced. For instance, the Irish nationalists brought their own agendas and meanings to the playing fields of the their country, realising that sport could function as a means for counteracting British ideology and upholding their own.

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[33] Patrick F. McDevitt, *"May the Best Man Win"*, cit., p. 12. Cf. also James A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981; Idem, *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad 1700–1914*, Frank Cass, London, 1988; Idem, ed., *"Benefits bestowed?" Education and British Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988.

[34] Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 2010, p. 8.

Sport is the site where values could be imposed or negotiated. With regard to the Gaelic Athletic Association, the organisation devoted to the revival of the organised Gaelic games, Richard Holt has written that its "formation and early history"

> is arguably the most striking instance of politics shaping sport in modern history; it is certainly the most outstanding example of the appropriation of sport by nationalism in the history of the British Isles and Empire.[35]

The revival of the Gaelic games – hurling and Gaelic football – was a hallmark of the Gaelic Renaissance and a strong pronouncement of Irish nationalism.[36] Nationalists were deeply convinced that if the British Empire was won on the playing field of Rugby and Eton, then on the playing field of Ireland was being perfected a new generation which might call the permanence of that victory into question.[37]

In 1884 the establishment of the GAA, the hallmark of the Irish Risorgimento, engendered a discursive struggle. Different and competing narratives around sport were constructed and disseminated in Ireland between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A hurling match came to signify much more than a sport event, being a practice by which large sections of Irish population develop a shared sense of belonging to the same community; it also allowed for the articulation of a new ideal of boyhood and distinctive Irish values. On a general level, as Mike Cronin put it:

> Sport has historically, and within contemporary society, played a varied and important role. It is a form of national popular culture, a forum for the creation, expression of maintenance of sense and ideals of identity, a form of business, and a central point of focus for groups within and outside of any given society or nation.[38]

For sure, in Ireland the development and spread of the Gaelic games came to shape Irish life well beyond the boundaries of arenas and playing fields.

This study will investigate the competing narratives and the whole network of words and images surrounding the revival of the Gaelic games in Ireland. It will be done through the filter of the Irish periodical press intended for juveniles. Story papers started to be produced in Ireland when the nationalist struggle was at its most intense. As early as 1936, Helen Martin argued that there is a positive and productive relationship between a period of

[35] Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 240.
[36] Patrick F. McDevitt, "*May the Best Man Win"*, cit., p. 24.
[37] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, Vintage, London, 1996, p. 25.
[38] Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity since 1884*. Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1999, p. 51.

nationalist fervour and the literature for children and youths popular at the time:[39] this was indeed the case in Ireland. The turn of the nineteenth century witnessed a cultural and political nationalist revival that coincided with the appearance of numerous periodicals intended for juveniles, which were decidedly nationalistic in tone and subject. Their fictional and not-fictional writings reflected and reinforced the prevailing attitudes, the ambitions of their editors and contributors. Story papers were an effective medium to repackage nationalist values in an accessible form.

Furthermore, centring this work on papers intended for juveniles means to focus on the peculiarities and the role played in society by a specific section of Irish readership, i.e. a generation of adolescents, who, thanks to the Education Acts previously mentioned, were literate and often sought reading material that was both entertaining and edifying. More importantly, a generation whose education – the "forging", as it was called – became paramount in the years here considered.

As discussed in the following section of the thesis, in the late nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, new attention was paid to youths of all social classes. Many factors promoted this increased interest in Ireland's youngsters, but the nationalists' *fin-de-siècle* preoccupation with youth and its forging had considerably pragmatic foundations. Nationalist Ireland was concerned about the cultural and political encroachment of Britain and sought to attain independence – legislative or political – as much through its future adult population than through its current one.

Particularly boys were the hope of the Irish nation and much interest was focused on them, on their physical and moral development. Boys were of the utmost concern because, unlike their female counterparts, they were perceived as Ireland's future citizens, leaders, and heads of families. Irish nationalism entrusted the boys, rather than the girls, with the duty to defend Ireland, a conviction being built "on the projection of the nation as a suffering woman and mother to be defended by her noble Gaelic sons".[40] Great attention was thus devoted to boys of all social classes for whom it was necessary to instil the correct kind of conduct and values – nationalist values.[41]

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[39] Helen Martin, "Nationalism in Children's Literature," *The Library Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1936, pp. 403-418.

[40] Alan Finlayson, "Imagined Communities" in Kate Nash and Alan Scott (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, John Wiley & Sons, 2008, p. 288. Cf. also Catherine L. Innes, *Woman and Nation In Irish Literature And Society, 1880-1935*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1993.

[41] See the Appendix "Daughters of the Nation? Irish Girls and Sport" for the differences in the attention paid to youths of one sex or the other.

Therefore, boyhood began to be regarded as a distinct and crucial phase of development, one in which boys were trained in the serious matter of character-building for manhood. Character formation was regarded as the key to success on both the individual and national levels, as it would help produce responsible citizens. The periodical papers were thought to be crucially formative in this regard, and so the nationalists strategized to ensure the "informal" character training of Irish boys by means of cheap publications. The present thesis inevitably traces the contours of this increasingly powerful sphere of influence, crucial in modelling the next generation of Irish men.

Above all, however, *No* Shoneen*: Gaelic Games and the Athletic Hero in the Irish Periodical Press* establishes new links between the increasing public concern with the "problem" of youth and the revival and development of the Gaelic games between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The intention is to highlight how discursive representations of sport – particularly Gaelic games – belonged to wider discussions of the physical and moral well-being of boys, especially in relation to the nationalists' political and cultural investment on Ireland's youth. As shown in Part II of the present thesis – comprising the chapters "Sport as a Cultural Signifier", "The Athletic Soldier" and "The Athletic Hero" – the regeneration of the traditional Irish sports was thought to be conducive to the regeneration of the entire nation. As will be shown in the section "Sport as a Cultural Signifier", the practice of traditional organised games was meant to awake enthusiasm for the hitherto neglected Gaelic heritage, to instil national pride and patriotism by pointing to the wealth of Irish traditions and their cultural distinctiveness from British ones. Harsh critics were addressed to the *shoneens* (or Seoiníní), the sycophantic people of Ireland who preferred the English attitudes, customs and lifestyle to Irish ones.

At the same time, through sporting practice the youths' bodies became more vigorous, healthier: basically, it contributed to both the moral and the physical regeneration of the Irish who were entrusted with building the future free nation. In brief, it was thought that morally and physically well-moulded future citizens would ensure Ireland's self-determination: the regenerated body of the Irish athlete began to be perceived as the vehicle through which attaining independence.

On the other hand, of particular interest is also the fact that a fit population was believed to debunk those myths of racial decline and inferiority put forward by the British, which were employed to justify discursively British dominion. Thus, the last chapters of this study aim to examine juvenile periodical literature as a window into the pivotal role played

by organised games in shaping new ideals of masculinity and models of boyhood, which would then inform readers' life.

This aspect related to sporting practice is addressed in the last two chapters, entitled "The Athletic Soldier" and "The Athletic Hero". I start my analysis by focusing on the nationalists' concerns to build up generations of good soldiers at the beginning of the twentieth century. The interrelation between sport and military preparedness, which casts its roots in the Victorian sporting ethos, maintained relevance in the Irish experience. Just as was the case with Britain, also within the Irish context, sport was deemed prodromal to the fight on the battlefield insofar as it was regarded as instrumental to the physical development of soldiers. Irishmen had the duty to be physically fit in order to be ready to active combat, to the long struggle for national self-determination and sporting practice could serve this pragmatic need. Ireland would benefit from inheriting able young men from hurling and football clubs. In particular, the story papers mirrored these beliefs by concocting an image of an "athletic warrior", depicted – with the hurling bat, the *camán*, shouldered as a rifle – as the maker and cornerstone of a future independent nation.

At the same time, the increasing Irish militarism of the turn of the century and the emphasis on the image of the "athletic soldier" were reflective of contemporary need to be martial so as to prove one's manhood, and revealing about the nationalists' need to construct an idealised and stable image of Ireland's male youth. Thus, the last chapter of the work casts light to what extent the organised games assisted the Irish in the conception of a Irish nationalist masculinity. As the analysis of the boys' papers will show, Gaelic games functioned crucially within the Irish context as a means for constructing alternate and contrasting masculinities, to counteract British ideology, as well as assert the manliness of the Irish. Symbols associated with manhood and Irishness by the British, particularly the widespread myth of the child-like or effeminised Celt, were rejected by the Irish also through sporting practice and the celebration of the Irish organised games. Concurrently, this analysis casts light on the gendered nature of the establishment and development of Gaelic games in Ireland.

I.b Periodization and Literature Review

In the present thesis, the prism of juvenile periodical literature is employed to investigate the network of images and words related to the emergence of an Irish sporting culture between

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More precisely, the focus is on the span of time between the foundation of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 – a crucial period in Irish history, punctuated with dramatic events such as the Easter Rising and its aftermath, characterised by political radicalisation and violence.[42] Therefore, this work locates itself at the intersection between Sport Studies, Cultural Studies and Literary Studies. Moreover, by focusing on the periodicals intended for juveniles, and by extension to the political and cultural investment in the young generations as manifested in the discourses around sport practice, I address a still largely uncharted topic. I do believe that by making a connection between the rise of the Irish sport system and the investment in Irish youth, I redress a lacuna in the current scholarship – i.e. the scholarship located at the intersection between the abovementioned disciplines – which I am going to illustrate. The next section of the thesis is indeed devoted to reviewing the scientific literature that is relevant to the topic.

With regard to Sport Studies, the growing scholarly interest in Ireland's sporting culture owes much to the scholarly efforts of the Australian historian W.F. Mandle. Mandle himself, nonetheless, benefitted from the increasing interest of British Cultural Studies in sport as a cultural practice since the late 1970s, and the coeval flowering of historical studies on the rise of modern sports in England and their subsequent diffusion throughout the Empire in the Victorian and Edwardian Ages. Before then, sport was almost virtually not existent in the macro-sector of Irish Studies. However a rich resource for research sport is, most academic writing in the field of Irish Studies has tended to ignore sport along with other forms of popular culture until quite recently. Admittedly, academia had been oblivious to sport all around the world.

Academic prejudice proved to be an obstacle to the establishment of Sport Studies both in Irish and international academic community. Up to the 1970s, sport had been deemed unworthy of serious academic research. In the recollections of many of its pioneers the idea of having challenged the assumption that the academic study of sport was trivial is an oft-heard refrain. Richard Cashman's observations on the 1977 University of New South Wales conference for "Making of Sporting Traditions", widely held as the official birth of sports history in Australia, are emblematic. Ten years later after the conference, Cashman recalled that the some eighty scholars who gathered there were a succession of speakers testifying to

[42] More precisely, although the main focus of this dissertation is on the revolutionary period and its "long gestation", throughout the work there will be also references to events occurring in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, digressions regarded as necessary preludes to a full understanding of the kind of relationship England established with Ireland and its consequences.

long-held desires to write about sport, but it was only at that juncture that "they were willing to come out of the closet" and "to challenge an intellectual snobbery that dismissed the academic study of sport as trivial and unworthy of serious consideration".[43]

Prejudice had even obtained among the circles of the researchers in Cultural Studies for many years, whereas current exponents of Cultural Studies find sport worthy of scholarly attention with no reserve. As observed by Scon Heller, Cultural Studies have always been a perpetually evolving "eclectic mix of research",[44] and, from the late 1970s, scholars operating in the field have become increasingly interested in sport, further attesting to the diversity of Cultural Studies research. Sport can be studied as a cultural practice and interpreted as a form of popular culture: it is evidenced by the wealth of sport-related research which has been undertaken by researchers formerly affiliated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham from the 1970s. For instance, the first systematic study by the CCCS on the relationship between sport as part of the contemporary mass media was carried out by Roy Peters in the article "Television Coverage of Sport",[45] which offered a stimulating analysis on the British television coverage of the 1976 Olympic Games. Peters's study was followed, only a year later, by Chas Critcher's "Fads and Fashions: A Preliminary Survey",[46] in which the author focused on the increasing popularity of kung fu, pool, skateboarding, and squash in the United Kingdom. Both contributions appeared in the *CCCS Stencilled Occasional Paper Series*, a series of books aimed to both a specialist and non-specialist audience.

Yet not even Cultural Studies were alien to scholarly prejudice against the legitimacy of sport in academia. Although sport figures prominently in one of the foundational texts of British Cultural Studies, namely Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957),[47] the popularity of sport as a research theme underwent dramatic fluctuations in the following two

[43] Quoted in Douglas Booth, "'On the Shoulders of a Giant': W.F. Mandle and the Foundations of Sports History in Australia." *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2002, pp. 151-158. See also Eric Dunning's observations in *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process. vol. 7*, University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2008, Introduction.
[44] Scon Heller, "Cultural studies: Eclectic mix of research sparks growing movement" in *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 31 January 1990, title.
[45] Roy Peters, "Television coverage of sport" in *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Paper Series* n. 48, 1976.
[46] Chas Critcher et al. (1977). "Fads and fashions" in *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Paper Series* n. 63, 1977.
[47] In this study, Hoggart depicts pre-war British working-class life and culture as a complex whole, in which various forms of popular entertainment like magazines and sports are tightly intertwined.

decades as the number of studies contributing to current scholarships sharply decreased in that period.[48] The tide of neglect was eventually and completely turned in the 1980s.

The early 1980s may be identified as a watershed in the relation between Sport Studies and Cultural Studies. These were the years when Jennifer Hargreaves with a scathing comment shed light on an overlooked dimension – albeit not totally neglected, as previously demonstrated – within Cultural Studies research: "the silences about sport and the comparative dearth of studies in the field," she wrote "are a form of cultural chauvinism which in practice support a dominant cultural order within cultural studies, ranking sport low".[49] Hargreaves partially redressed the lacuna she had identified with the publication of volumes analysing sport through the use of cultural study and the notion of ideology, or focusing on the interrelationship between women's participation in sport and issues of gender, class, ethnicity and disability.[50] The retrieval of sport in Cultural Studies research culminated in 1992, when an issue of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* was entirely devoted to exploring the theme of "British Cultural Studies and Sport". Most of these studies located themselves at the intersection between the sociology of sport – already an established field of study – and the Cultural Studies as underpinned by Stuart Hall's insights, and they aimed to interpret the significance of sport in the production and experiencing of contemporary national cultures.[51]

In the magmatic scholarship of Irish Studies, as mentioned before, the tide of neglect was eventually turned with the publication of Mandle's *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924* (1987), which opened new paths of research. The result is a growing body of scientific literature that deals with "the history, sociology and politics of sport in Ireland per se and also within the British context".[52] Irish Sport Studies are now an expanding field of research at the academic level and the considerable impact of sport on Irish local and national politics is widely acknowledged. Sport has been instrumental to address fundamental issues concerning Irish nationalism as well as the problematic

[48] For full statistical data, see: David L. Andrews and John W. Loy. "British Cultural Studies and Sport: Past Encounters and Future Possibilities." *Quest*, vol. 45, no. 2, May 1993, pp. 259-262.
[49] Jennifer Hargreaves. "Theorising sport: An introduction." In Jennifer Hargreaves (ed.), *Sport, Culture and Ideology*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1982, p. 17.
[50] Here it will suffice to mention her *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity* (2000) and *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports* (1994), both published by Routledge; and the book co-authored with Patricia A. Vertinsky, *Physical Culture, Power, and the Body,* Routledge, London; New York, 2007.
[51] Cf. David L. Andrews and John W. Loy, "British Cultural Studies and Sport: Past Encounters and Future Possibilities", cit., p. 255.
[52] Bairner, Alan. *Sport and the Irish: Histories, Identities, Issues*. University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2005, p. 2.

relationship between Imperialism, Britishness and the construction of a peculiar Irish identity. More specifically, the role that sport played in the construction of Irish identity in the crucial years around the turn of the century is analysed in virtually all the studies focusing on the foundation of the Gaelic Athletic Association (commonly referred to as GAA) in 1884.

The studies on the establishment and work of the GAA could not but deal with the rise of nationalism in Ireland, whenever the GAA presented itself as Catholic, rural and politically nationalist – a precise political stance on Irish matters corroborated by its choice of patrons and the involvement of staunch republicans in the Association from its inception.[53] Indeed, W.F. Mandle's *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924* (1987) – not to mention some shorter works he authored such as "The I.R.B. and the Beginnings of the Gaelic Athletic Association" (1977) and "Parnell and Sport" (1994) – and Mike Cronin's *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland* (1999) have explored, at both the local and national levels, the political dimension of GAA, with the former scholar frequently concentrating on the influence of the Irish Republican Brotherhood on the first thirty years of the Association, and the latter attempting to chart the force of nationalism in Ireland through the broad social and culture structure of Gaelic games and football.[54]

Despite the flourishing of studies on politics and sport in Ireland, however, certain research themes, albeit important, remain relatively underdeveloped. It is widely acknowledged that many GAA members were drawn to the nationalist movement for Irish independence, and whereas some of them took active part in the 1916 Rising, many more of the younger generation fought in the subsequent conflicts. Still much uncharted, though, is the fact that many other members remained deeply committed to the constitutional faction in Irish nationalism and went on to fight in the Great War – Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh's *The GAA & Revolution in Ireland, 1913-1923* (2015) had the merit of partially redressing this lacuna. This miscellaneous collection tackled the Association's links and attitudes to nationalism, unionisms, and republicanism, paying considerable attention to the members' involvement in dramatic events such as the Great War, the Easter Rising and its aftermath of turbulence, with the Anglo-Irish War and civil strife.[55]

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[53] Cf. W.F. Mandle, "The I.R.B. and the Beginnings of the Gaelic Athletic Association", in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 20, no. 80, 1977, pp. 418-438.
[54] Mike Cronin. *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland*, cit., p. 6.
[55] Admittedly, this lacuna regarding the subject of the GAA and the First World War may be due to the fact that the first total conflict had been gradually occluded from the national – and nationalist – historical narrative of the country written after the independence, a process of elision famously described by F.X. Martin as an act of national amnesia. See F.X Martin, "1916: Myth, Fact, and Mystery" *in Studia Hibernica*, no. 7, 1967, pp. 7-

Not unlike Ó Tuathaigh's *The GAA & Revolution in Ireland, 1913-1923*, the present thesis attempts to explore an underdeveloped theme. Certainly, this research builds on the previous scholarship as I focus on the role of sport as a means of cultural representation and its influence on the ongoing construction of both personal and collective self-images. First and foremost, I build my study upon the work of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger on the notion of "invented tradition" – a notion first expounded in in the eponymous 1983 book[56] that will be reiterated several times with relation to the modernization (or, better, re-invention) of hurling in 1884 – and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991). Both of the above-mentioned works were ground-breaking in their identification in modern codified sports a decisive factor in the construction of identities, especially at the nation-state level: Hobsbawm even defined sport as one of the most significant among the new manifestations of late nineteenth century Europe.[57] Moreover, there is general consensus in nationalism and identity scholarship on that sport constitutes a major ritual of popular culture contributing to the theoretical concept of the nation as an "imagined community".[58] In 1983, Anderson propagated the notion of "imagined community" arguing that when an audience gather to attend a performance spectacle, including sport events, an imagined community is likely to be constructed, even if it takes place for a limited amount of time; this theoretical model can be fruitfully applied to the context of early-twentieth century Ireland, because when the Irish people then congregated for a hurling or Gaelic football match, they forged a sense of belonging to the same imagined community that implied also a construction of a collective identity.

Afterwards, the exploration of the role of sport in identity construction have been furthered by edited volumes such as Jeremy McClancy's *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity* (1996), Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter's *Sport and National Identity in the Post-War World* (2004), and Philip Dine and Seán Crosson's *Sport, Representation and Evolving*

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126. On the subject see also: Adrian Gregory, *Ireland and the Great War: A War to Unite Us all?*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2002; Kevin Myers, *Ireland's Great War*, The Lilliput Press, Dublin, 2014.

[56] Eric J. Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 [1983]. In the first page of his introduction, Eric Hobsbawm defined "invented traditions" as follows: "'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past […]. However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of 'invented traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition."

[57] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

[58] Cf. Peter, Barrer, "'Šatan Is God!': Re-imagining Contemporary Slovak National Identity through Sport," *Sport in Society*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2007, p. 223.

Identities in Europe – all of them concurring to form the theoretical framework of the present study.

I do build my research on this earlier scholarship. However, the present thesis also aims to examine the distinctive contribution of sport to the construction of Irish individual and collective identities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with particular reference to the creation of an ideal of Irish boyhood. A survey of sporting representations in juvenile periodical literature offers valuable insights into the recourse to sport, in early-twentieth-century Ireland, as the main vehicle to forge the character of the youths. Thus, in order to tackle this issue, the present thesis yokes together two cultural manifestations – sport and juvenile periodical literature – that have been widely acknowledged as core components in the cultural articulation of the Irish nation. The following statement by Richard King and David Leonard can be easily paraphrased, by replacing cinema with popular leisure reading material, so as to underpinning the present work: as the two scholars have pointed out, "sport cinema matters because sport matters and because popular culture matters in the creation, construction, dissemination, and articulation of dominant tropes and discourses of race, gender, class, sexuality and nation".[59]

In British Sport Studies the role of sport in forging the character of youths has been usually analysed taking into account the imperialist ideology underpinning it. Jeffrey Mangan offered us an insightful analysis of this aspect in works such as *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: the Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (2000) and *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (1998). With reference to the Irish context, however, a dearth of studies on the subject has to be acknowledged. Generally speaking, Youth Studies are still in their infancy in Ireland. Furthermore, scholars on youth's culture and history have just begun to cast light on the nationalist investment in the boys and girls of Ireland during the first two decades of the twentieth century, when the nationalists' struggle grew to its most intense. This datum stands out as surprising, especially if we consider the vast amount of studies on the years between 1884 and 1922 in Irish history that has been produced since the birth of the Free Irish State.

The timespan 1884-1922, in reality, still demands scholarly attention and the need for further scholarship on the period is most acutely felt by those looking at the intersection between culture and the political nationalist struggle. Until the 1980s, most of the studies in

[59] Richard King and David Leonard, *Visual Economies of/in Motion: Sport and Film*, Peter Lang, New York, 2006, p. 3.

these literary and historical subfield focused on the protagonists of the Easter Rising of 1916, the Gaelic cultural revival and the leading figures who made it – above all, William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, Douglas Hyde and Standish O'Grady – the rise and the fall of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and the harsh debates raging over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922. The literary background of the 1916 Easter Rising – particularly that coinciding with 'high' literature represented by writers such as William Butler Yeats, AE, Synge – has been extensively investigated by a number of scholars. Contemporary scholarship did not even fail to analyse the (mediocre) literary production of the three insurrection poet-fighters of the rebellion – Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh and Plunkett.

Interestingly, in recent years, there has been a shift towards the "rank-and-file" of Irish literature and culture, which runs parallel to the path taken by today's historiography. As previously noted, for many years, the historiographical books and articles devoted to the 1880-1922 period focused on the protagonists of the Easter Rising of 1916 and its aftermath. Historiography, moreover, bore the traces of the profound divisions in Irish society brought about by the Rising and the Treaty: deeply partisan, much of the earlier historiography oscillated between the eulogy and the denunciatory, depending on the 'side' taken by the author.[60] Until the 1970s, the reading landscape witnessed also the enormous popularity of narrative accounts and memoirs of the protagonists of those days, recounting their deeds and – at times – victory against the odds: of certain value as they were first-hand testimony of witnesses, these memoirs nonetheless usually lacked the documentary support allowing for their reliability to be checked.[61] With the publication of the above-mentioned "1916: Myth, Fact, and Mystery" in 1967 and of David Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish Life. 1913-1921* in 1977, scholarship entered a sharply revisionist phase which transformed our understanding of the period. These publications also marked a shift of focus from elite politics to the second ranks of movements and organisations – including the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League –, the associational life of communities in which such organisations operated and the rank-and-file of ordinary Irish people.[62]

As the interest in "the rank-and-file" grew, aspects of the crucial period 1880-1922 that had been previously neglected came to the forefront. One was the nationalists' political and cultural investment on Ireland's youth. Indeed, the years 2000s have seen a significantly

[60] Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, *The GAA & Revolution in Ireland, 1913-1923*, The Collins Press, Cork, 2015, p. 2.
[61] *Ibidem*. Examples of first-hand accounts of people who had participated in the major events of the 1910s and 1920s are *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, 1916-21. Told by the Men Who made it. With a Unique Pictorial Record of the Period*. Mercier Press, Cork, 2009 [1947]; Tom Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland*, Irish Press, Dublin, 1949; Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*. Anvil, Tralee, 1964.
[62] Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, *The GAA & Revolution in Ireland, 1913-1923*, cit., p. 4.

growing interest in the ways that youth was socially and politically constructed and represented at the time. Marnie Hay's "Moulding the Future: Na Fianna Éireann and its Members, 1909-1923" (2011), David Dickson's *Irish Classrooms and British Empire: Imperial Contexts in the Origins of Modern Education* (2012), John Countryman and Kelly Matthews's *Country of the Young: Interpretations of Youth and Childhood in Irish Culture* (2013) and Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan's *Adolescence in Modern Irish History* (2015) are among the most significant titles that have been published on the subject.[63] Subsequent scholarly work on youth relating to the post-1880 Ireland has dealt with the emergence of new social constructions of childhood, social and educational policies directed at youngsters, and the youths and leisure.

What Youth Studies, now a broadening field of study, have pointed out is the fact that the role of boys and girls in the long struggle for national self-determination was to the fore in the debates of the decades around 1900. Indeed, as Gavin Forster has observed, "the meaning and value of youth underwent a radical transformation in nationalist political discourse" in the first decades of the twentieth century.[64] Throughout the nineteenth century, Irish youth occupied the lowest strata of the social status hierarchy and they were subjects to the authority of parents, employers, the clergy or other elders. The undeniable centrality of their labour to both the rural and urban economies was not sufficient to grant them autonomy and equal rights either in the economic or political spheres. Emigration was the best outlet for those looking at social and economic advancement. But Young Ireland's bleak status was enhanced for the better when nationalists identified in Irish youths the main agents of both the struggle for independence and the nation building process.

The opening line of W.B. Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium"[65] has been regarded as the poet's meditation over his country's historical fascination with youth and vitality, recurring tropes in early Irish literature and in the coeval discourses about Ireland's lot. Throughout the history of modern Ireland, cultural representations of youth have been employed as focal points for discussions of social and political issues. Alongside the allegory of the *Shan Van*

[63] Marnie Hay "Moulding the Future: Na Fianna Éireann and its Members, 1909-1923." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Revie*w, vol. 100, no. 400, 2011, pp. 441-454; David Dickson, Justyna Pyz and Christopher Shepard, (eds.), *Irish Classrooms and British Empire: Imperial Contexts in the Origins of Modern Education*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2012; John Countryman and Kelly Matthews, *Country of the Young: Interpretations of Youth and Childhood in Irish Culture*, Four Courts Press, Portland, 2013; Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan's *Adolescence in Modern Irish History*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2015. The last work is a very broad study, intended as an overview with little geographical or temporal specificity.

[64] Quoted in John Countryman and Kelly Matthews (eds.), *The Country of the Young. Interpretations of Youth and Childhood in Irish Culture*, Four Court Press, Dublin, 2013, p. 52.

[65] "That is no country for old men. The young".

Vocht[66] (The Poor Old Woman), in nationalist discourses there was the tendency of feminise Ireland as a youthful queen has been used by movements for political independence, a tradition which harks back to the seventeenth century, in the poetic form of the *aisling* or 'vision poem', up to the baleful climax of the Northern Irish Troubles of the 1960s and 1970s.[67] But, at the political level, youth came to the forefront especially in the period prior to the revolution and would be prevalent well into the twentieth century. Youths began to be valued in terms of their relationship to Ireland as its future builders and citizens.

For instance, Cumman na nGaedheal[68] pledged its members to "advance the cause of Ireland's national independence" not only by cultivating Gaelic culture and supporting Irish industries, but also by providing physical education and training for the boys and girls of Ireland.[69] In the same years, in the forefront for what concerned the interest in the young people of Ireland were also the women who founded, on Easter Sunday, 1900, Inghinidhe na hEireann (Gaelic for 'Daughters of Erin'). This was a women's nationalist group that had in its ranks leading figures such as Maud Gonne, who served as the organisation's first president for thirteen years, Helena Molony and Countess Markievicz, who were all persuaded that England "sought to weaken Ireland through its children".[70]

Their interest in Irish youth manifested itself in the effort to instil in the boys and girls of Ireland a pride for their distinct nationality, and, in the earlier years, all the activities of Inghinidhe na hEireann were geared towards the attainment of this goal. Among their initiatives, one should remember the plan for the Patriotic Children's Treat, a meeting meant to honour Dublin's "patriotic children" on the occasion of Queen Victoria's visit to Ireland in April 1900. The aged Queen was then in the capital to gain Irish favour over the Anglo-Boer War and, among the festivities organised to welcome her, one was the Children's Day, consisting in a breakfast on the lawn served to loyalist children. With the aid of the young men of the GAA and the Celtic Literary Society, Inghinidhe na hEireann responded to this loyalist initiative by offering refreshments to the children and teenagers who had not been invited to Queen Victoria's breakfast. Nearly 30,000 young people, most of whom boys aged twelve-fourteen, turned up at the festivity.

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[66] Please note that this is a popular phonetic rendering of the Irish phrase *An tSeanbhean Bhocht*.
[67] John Countryman and Kelly Matthews (eds.). *The Country of the Young. Interpretations of Youth and Childhood in Irish Culture*. Four Court Press, Dublin, 2013, p. 1.
[68] A coalescence of several nationalist societies under the leadership of the old Fenian John O'Leary, the organisation known as Cumman na nGaedheal was established on 25 November 1900 in Dublin.
[69] Virginia E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press. Ireland, 1900-1922*, Peter Lang, New York, 1985, p. 15. See also P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union. 1801-1922*, Methuen, London, 1922, p. 639.
[70] *Bean na hEireann*, Number 25, p. 10.

According to several scholars,[71] the Patriotic Children's Treat was such an enormous success that it spurred the women of Inghinidhe na hEireann to renovate their enthusiasm in organising drama workshops, holding free classes in the Irish language and folklore, including music and dancing, and promoting excursions to significant historic sites in the country[72] such as when girls' classes were taken to Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown".[73] Their impact of the organization's activities on the lives of Ireland's youth was celebrated by the sympathetic press: "The Inghinidhe na hEireann, a society of women, founded nine years ago by Miss Maud Gonne," reads a 1900s article in *Bean na hEireann*, "conducts large classes for children, and in this way alone has done incalculable good in the city of Dublin, and in the places in the country where they have branches. Hundreds of children have passed through their classes and are now working in the Nationalist Movement".[74]

Clearly, he increasing public concern with the "problem" of youth in early-twentieth-century Ireland could not pass unnoticed at the academic level for a too long time, so it does not come as a surprise that inquiries into the histories of youth and adolescence in Ireland have accelerated in recent years. However, there is still important work to be done in this field. In the broadening field of study on Irish youth the pivotal role of sport in forging character, instilling pride and national awareness as well as its being instrumental to physically train future revolutionaries has not been explored. Hopefully, this thesis will saturate this lacuna. Actually, this study intends to contribute to the current scholarship on Ireland's youth history and culture also by taking into exam a publishing genre which has been neglected so far.

In the rich landscape of articles and monographs devoted to the periodical press in the crucial period 1884-1922, there are only passing references to periodicals intended for juveniles. The interest in the "rank-and-file" brought about by Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish Life. 1913-1921* paved the way also for the publication of detailed studies on highly specific topics such as the Irish periodical press between the turn of the century and the establishment

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[71] Virginia E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press. Ireland, 1900-1922*, Peter Lang, New York, 1985, p. 125.

[72] It is possible to pinpoint recurring patterns in the activities of the various associations that placed themselves under the banner of Irish nationalism. For example, day trips and tours to places pregnant with Irish history were organised for didactic purposes also by the Gaelic League While travelling, trippers were taught about the main events that had occurred in the places they were visiting so that they could feel connected to the country's past and its protagonists.

[73] *Bean na hEireann*, Editorial Notes, issue no. 9, p. 8 (n.t.d.). *Bean na hEireann* was the joint journalistic enterprise of Maud Gonne and Helena Molony. First published in 1908, it set out to counteract the "frivolous and degrading" influence of English women's magazines. There is now an ample scholarship that place emphasis on this monthly starting from the pioneering Elizabeth Coxhead, *Daughters of Erin. Five Women of the Irish Renascence*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1965.

[74] *Bean na hEireann*, Editorial Notes, issue no. 8, p. 8 (n.t.d.).

of the Irish Free State. In 1985, Virginia E. Glandon's *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press. Ireland, 1900-1922* – a seminal work surveying the career of Arthur Griffith in the context of the advanced nationalist press – paved the way for more recent studies that have revealed the dynamism of Ireland's journalism in promoting and propagating nationalist notions. Ben Novick, for instance, analysed the rhetorical innovations and strategies of the anti-war and anti-recruitment nationalist press at the time of the First World Word.[75] Ann Andrews, in *Newspapers and Newsmakers: the Dublin Nationalist Press in the mid-Ninenteeth Century*, offered an insight into the impact of the Dublin nationalist press on the development of Irish nationalism between 1842 and 1867, also discussing the recourse to fiction and poetry by the contributors to these mid-nineteenth-century newspapers.[76] Finally, in a succession of articles and monographic studies, Karen Steele devoted her attention to the explosion of magazines edited by women that ran parallel in time with the Gaelic revival in literature, convincingly demonstrating that the newspapers formed an arena for public debate on national priorities which was in dialogue with the Irish literary and dramatic revival and its goals. Steele, combining literary and historical interests, analysed women's journals for their rhetorical and literary complexity, accounting for the literary effects and generic innovations of fiction, poetry, and drama published in the advanced nationalist press. Furthermore, Steele's analytic tools as well as her close readings of the advanced nationalist journals as texts that reflect a dynamic exchange between the cultural and ideological movements that produced and were shaped by them provided me with a blueprint for my own analysis.[77]

This list of works, however, attests to the increasing scholarly interest in the periodical press aimed at an adult readership rather than a young one. Indeed, the periodicals intended for juveniles have not attracted much attention so far, with the unique exception of *Our Boys*, one of the papers analysed in the present thesis.[78] Thus, a thesis which purports to be also an analysis of magazines for young readers – identified as the vantage point from which analysing a network of images and discourse related to sporting practice in Ireland –

[75] Cf. Ben Novick, "Advanced Nationalist Propaganda and Moralistic Revolution. 1914-1918" in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002, pp. 34-52; by the same author see also: *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda during the First World War*. Four Courts Press, 2001.

[76] Ann Andrews, *Newspapers and Newsmakers: the Dublin Nationalist Press in the mid-Nineteenth Century*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2014. In particular, see pp. 56-65.

[77] Cf. Karen Margaret Steele, *Women, Press, and Politics during the Irish Revival*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 2007.

[78] See the sub-chapter "*Our Boys*: A Compound of Catholicism and Irishness" of the present thesis.

tackles still unexplored aspects in the field of both Sport Studies and the burgeoning Youth Studies.

I.c Methodology

As previously stated, through the filter of the periodical literature intended for juveniles, this thesis examines some facets of the Irish sporting culture as it emerged during the "Long Gestation" of Ireland's independence. My attention is not devoted to culture in the Arnoldian sense, as "the best that has been thought and said in the world".[79] The term "culture" is not intended in its evaluative use, but in its analytic one, as a word that seeks to describe the whole system of significations by which a society or a section of it understands itself and its relations with the world.[80]

In Ireland, during the so-called "Long Gestation", there existed a complex network of images, symbols and discourses related to Irish sporting culture which I decided to raise and investigate through the filter of periodicals. In my view, periodicals are an effective *medium* through which one can grasp the deeper structures of concurrent events and phenomena. With regard to this quality of the periodical press, moreover, John North has intriguingly suggested that the "multifarious nature" of periodicals makes them an efficient instrument for registering the course and shifts of a civilisation.[81] Periodicals, however, are also a means of constructing opinion and identity as well: therefore, while examining how sport was represented in the Irish juvenile papers of early-twentieth-century Ireland, I also illustrate how the very same periodicals constructed a whole network of images and a specific discourse related to Irish sporting culture.[82]

In order to do so, one has, first of all, to take into account the specificities of the periodical press, which, as North has observed, possesses a "multifarious nature". Consequentially, the specific form of cultural production I investigate – namely, the story papers intended for juveniles – can be best analysed if the institutionalised boundaries

[79] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*. *Landmarks in the History of Education***,** Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1960, p.6.
[80] See David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture*. Manchester University Press, Manchester; New York, 1988, p. vii.
[81] Quoted in Lyn Pykett, "Reading the Periodical Press: Text and Context," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1989, p. 102.
[82] Nonetheless, there is a representational and symbiotic relationship between sport and the media which has been examined in several recent works such as Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes's *Power Play: Sport, the Media and Popular Culture* (2000) and David Rowe's *Critical Readings: Sports, Culture and the Media* (2004). Indeed, media play an important part in contemporary culture, being the major disseminators of cultural representations.

between Literary studies, History and Economics are blurred. The study of juvenile papers demands a recognition of an interdisciplinary approach to the material. By the way, the analysis of culture as intended by Williams – "Culture is Ordinary" – is inevitably interdisciplinary, as it involves the analysis "of the organisation of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate".[83]

Thus, this investigation is not dominated by a single theoretical position, but, at various times, draws from Literary studies, History and Economics to analyse how sport was imbricated in the production of "the structures" of an individual's "everyday life – family roles, gender relations, language patterns, the community's 'common sense'" and to analyse the discourse related to Irish sporting culture around the turn of the century.[84] I draw on the eclectic methodology of Cultural Studies, here intended as an interdisciplinary field in which perspectives from different disciplines can be selectively tapped into, to examine this peculiar subject matter, often dismissed by academia as trivial, but which current exponents of Cultural Studies find worthy of attention.

My approach combines textual analysis – close reading – with a detailed investigation of the historical and cultural context in which these texts were produced. Story papers need to be read and understood as part of the culture and society from which they emerged, and "within the actual means and conditions of their production".[85] Thus, the examined texts are seen as inseparable from the conditions of their production in history, their reception, and the historical, political and cultural specificities of the period around 1900 in Ireland.

Moreover, Williams suggested that the papers should not be considered as separate entities from "the cognate forms of other writing, publishing and reading […] from other kinds of political and cultural formation and organisation – from political movements, new industrial organizations, educational developments, changes in the theatre…".[86] This is because they all form the same structure, and "if we study relations, in any actual analysis, we reach the point where we see that we are studying a general organisation in a particular

[83] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, Pelican, Harmondsworth, p. 61.
[84] Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An introduction*, Routledge, London; New York, 2003 [3rd edition], p. 39.
[85] Raymond Williams, "Crisis in English Studies", in *Writing in Society*, Verso, London, 1983, p. 210.
[86] Raymond Williams, "The Press and Popular Culture", in George Boyce, James Curran, and Pauline Wingate (eds.) *Newspaper History: From the Seventeenth Century to the* Present, Constable, London, 1978, p. 91.

example, and in this general organisation there is no element that we can abstract and separate from the rest".[87]

In order to put the juvenile periodical sources into context, and to shed light on the implications of their writings, this thesis includes a wider range of archival reading material: ephemera, newspapers' articles, annual reports, police reports and even private correspondence and manuscripts. I tried to position each juvenile paper within contemporary discourse and to identify some patterns in them that might reveal both their internal mechanisms and their external relationships. The context concocted by these sources is crucially important as the content of the periodicals was also the product of wider societal anxieties and fears, as demonstrated by these other sources.

Through an in-depth analysis of the periodical's fictional and non-fictional writings about sport, including letters to the editors and opinion articles, I was able to examine how Irish people invested energies in participating in a discursive contention about the significance of sports in Irish life and culture. Taking recourse also to other texts, I transcribed hundreds of excerpts representing the various nuances within the ranks of Irish nationalism. While analysing them, I looked for recurring concepts, embedded narratives, and various meanings attached – at the discursive level – to the practice of sport. The analysis of patterns of representation will enable the emergence of the complex network of images, symbols and discourses related to the sporting practice. This textual analysis has then been first set against the paper background formed by other contemporary documents, and then it has been incorporated into the historical narrative of the emergence of the GAA, cultural revivalism and of the turbulences of the revolutionary period. To substantiate the thesis' arguments, long quotations and extracts from the periodicals occur repeatedly throughout this work. This allows not to track down references to books and periodicals that are not always easily available. Finally, I also took into account the pictures featured in the periodicals, which are "characteristically a mixed form", and in which "the relation of blocks of text to visual material is a crucial part of their meaning".[88] Indeed, as I gathered by analysing the juvenile papers, often pictures offered a visual correlative to the concepts expounded in the writings.

This way of analysis proved to be productive as demonstrated, for instance, by Jeffrey Hill's study of the class-bound Englishness of the *Tough of the Track* comic series

[87] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, cit., p. 61.
[88] Margaret Beetham, "Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre," in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1989, p. 97.

(from the late 1940s until the early 1990s), which was centred on the athletic feats of the middle-distance runner Alf Tupper. Hill has noted that these stories published in *Rover*, while capitalising on the growing interest in athletics and its heroes in post-war Britain, also shed a light on a distinct phase of British history, when it seemed that the nation was advancing towards modernisation and social improvement, intended among other things to bring benefits to the more disadvantaged sections of society. More specifically, the stories are also reflective of a phase when sport was believed to play a pivotal role in this process of social change: as the working-class Alf – thanks to hard work, self-discipline and honesty – usually beats runners from wealthy and snobbish families, his feats on the athletics track denote a concept of sport as a means to obtain social justice, i.e. to counterbalance unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity in society.[89]

Finally, other peculiarities of the periodical press should be taken into account. In the present case, Margaret Beetham's typology of the periodical press comes in handy. As Beetham reminded us in "Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre", literary scholars have suggested a distinction between "closed" and "open" forms; whereas the former kind is represented by forms which assert the dominant structures of meaning by offering the reader only one option of making sense of the text and excluding alternatives, the latter resists closure by allowing for the possibility of alternative – if not even subversive – meanings. Drawing on these theories, Beetham came to the conclusion that periodicals are open-ended and resistant to closure. First of all, a periodical is open-ended, because it "always points beyond itself – to other numbers of the same periodicals, to other words and texts which give it meaning, to other periodicals, books or entertainments".[90]

Second, openness is also a defining characteristic of the relationship the periodical engages with its readership. On the one hand, it suggests a variety of readings, as it does not demand to be read from front to back in order as the average readers "select and read only a fraction of the whole" at time, and in the order they wish. On the other hand, readers are not only involved in the production of their own individual readings, but also in "the development of the text", i.e. the whole run of the paper, because the periodical is a form of reading material which "openly offers readers the chance to construct their own texts". If sales figures give an idea about the reader response, editors also garner more specific impressions by spurring readers to contribute to the production of the paper. Readers "intervene directly […] by writing letters, comments and other contributions", all types of

[89] Jeffrey Hill, "I Like to Have a Go at the Swanks": Alf Tupper and English Society, 1945-1990, in pp. 81-82.
[90] Margaret Beetham, "Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre," cit., p. 97.

writing that are taken in exam in the present work, because they provided me with a "window" into the mentality of Irish youth at the beginning of the twentieth century.[91]

The fact that the periodical is an open, rather than closed, form, makes it both "a potentially creative form for its readers" and a "potentially disruptive kind of text".[92] Yet, this distinctive openness is counterbalanced by elements of closure, which ensure consistency. Continuity in the adopted format and pattern of contents from number to number is warranty of that consistency that is necessary to maintain a regular readership. Readers must also be offered a recognisable position of the paper in successive numbers. The juvenile papers here examined, moreover, not only offered a recognisable position but were truly reproducers of a specific ideology. Profit was not the only motive for those involved in their production, nor was the most important. Instead, the desire to educate and forge the character of the readership on nationalist lines was paramount.

Finally, Beetham noted that the nature of a periodical as a serial publication implies that each issue can also be read as a self-contained text, so that the periodical "is both open-ended and end-stopped". A periodical is a true compound of openness and closure, as "each number must function both as part of a series and as a free-standing unit which makes sense to the reader of the single issue".[93]This quality of the periodical press becomes crucially important when analysing editorial choices such as the production of special issues, and the juxtaposition of specific articles, stories, pictures within individual numbers of the publication.

In conclusion, Beetham's insightful observations provided me with a sort of template to handle such a complex and multifarious material as the periodical. From the present analysis what emerges clearly is the fact juvenile periodicals were indeed a barometer of public concerns and interests. But not only that. Some of the juvenile periodicals here examined were also among the engines of the Irish struggle for independence, because through opinion articles, tales, ballads, they concurred to spread anti-British sentiment and gave impetus to the separatists' campaigns. Moreover, their fluid boundaries allowing for the readers' direct intervention in the production of the periodicals made them an arena where discussing crucial national matters. Sport and its practice were among the topics being discussed. Before analysing the cultural representations of sport disseminated by the papers, it is convenient to focus more closely on the corpus of this thesis. The general features as

[91] *Ibid*. cit., pp. 97-99.
[92] *Ibid*. cit., p. 99.
[93] *Ibid.*

well as the peculiarities of *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* are detailed in the next chapter.

II

THE CORPUS

II.a Relevance of Periodical Literature: The Battle against Anglicisation

As Patrick Maume has observed, the decades around the year 1900 were punctuated with a series of cultural and political events that influenced the drive for Irish national freedom achieved in 1922. The establishment of the Free State was the culmination of multiple and intertwined cultural, social and political processes that began some decades before. More precisely, the whole set of processes is commonly believed to have been engendered by the tragic demise of Charles Stewart Parnell in 1891. His own repudiation by the Irish Party after the O'Shea divorce scandal in 1890 resulted in a political vacuum in which no single, strong voice was capable to emerge. In the following years, dissident voices would begin to rise and the Irish population would split into several minor factions: the supporters of Home Rule, those placing social and economic development above it, and the radical advanced nationalists. But the immediate consequence of Parnell's repudiation was political disillusionment.

For such a great impact on Irish politics, the tragic end of Parnell represented a watershed also in Ireland's cultural history. If Irish energy used to be concentrated upon the drive for Home Rule, now people reacted to the political vacuum by seeking out new modes of expression with a transference of energy from politics to culture.[94] Declan Kiberd has claimed that the failure at the political level made "a younger generations of intellectuals [turn] from politics back to culture".[95] William Butler Yeats likewise famously stated:

> the modern literature of Ireland, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from parliamentary politics; an event was conceived; and the race began, as I think, to be troubled by that event's long gestation.[96]

[94] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939. The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford, 1978*, Doubleday, New York, 1979, p. 27.
[95] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, cit., p. 23.
[96] W.B. Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats: Consisting of Reveries Over Childhood and Youth, the Trembling of the Veil, and Dramatis Personae*, Collier Books, New York, 1965, p. 559.

If Irish politics was struggling, literature and culture flourished. Yeats's himself played a crucial role in this renaissance as in December 1891 he launched the Irish Literary Society of London, the foundation of which was closely followed by the creation of its equivalent in Dublin – the National Literary Society. The principal aim of these institutions was to popularise the lore, legends and literature of Ireland that could be still gathered in the countryside. It was a revivalist goal that Yeats himself tried to attain by re-publishing various works on Irish literature and setting up a network of libraries, and furthered once more by the establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre. These years were marked by a rekindling of interest in the country's past, fuelled by the publication of Standish O'Grady's works – particularly, his translations of the Ulster sagas and the issue of *Story of Ireland* (1894) – by the activities of Yeats and his acolytes, and by the crusade to preserve[97] the ancient Gaelic language started by Douglas Hyde.

The Gaelic Revival in Ireland, in fact, was launched in 1892 by Douglas Hyde's lecture on *The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland*, the famous speech addressed to the Irish Literary Society "which was to be Ireland's declaration of cultural independence, analogous to Ralph Waldo Emerson's epoch-making address on the *American Scholar*".[98] At the time, Hyde felt obliged to coin the neologism 'de-anglicise' for "the want of a better term" in English to convey his coveted desire of a profound cultural transformation of the country; instead, the newly-coined word contained in it "something harsh, something virulent"[99] which adequately pointed to the rebellious concerted action that was necessary to counteract the toxic effects of Anglicisation – i.e. the process whereby something is made English in form and character. Indeed, Douglas Hyde's speech stood out as a condemnation of the slavish conformism of the Irish, who had degenerated into a people of imitators aping everything English only because it was English: "We will become," Hyde prophesised, "what we are largely at present, a nation of imitators, the Japanese of Western Europe, lost to the power of native initiative and alive only to second-hand assimilation".[100]

However, Hyde contested the notion of the process of Anglicisation as inevitable, thus implying that it could be resisted and reversed. The tide had to be turned, the

[97] The government census of 1891 showed that, at the time, less than 40,000 people spoke Gaelic exclusively out of a population of over 4 million, that is of the whole population. In general, only 650,000 knew some Gaelic confirming the unequal proportion in the spread of the two languages. It should also be noted that the Gaelic-speaking areas comprised those of the impoverished Gaeltacht in the west: Connemara, Kerry and Donegal.
[98] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, cit., p. 138.
[99] This is an extract from Douglas Hyde's speech at Carnegie Hall in 1905. See: Douglas Hyde [and Breandán Ó Conaire], *Language, Lore and Lyrics: Essays and Lectures*, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1986, p. 179.
[100] *Ibid*., cit, p. 180.

phenomenon of Anglicisation had to be counteracted. In order to do so, Irish people had to commit themselves to reviving the widespread use of spoken Irish on the island – Hyde was deeply convinced that restoring the Irish language to its pre-colonial status would entail a regeneration of the entire country. At the same time, they should have striven to create a modern literature in the Irish language. He advocated the "use of Anglo-Irish literature instead of English books, especially instead of English periodicals" as he spurred his compatriots to "set our face firmly against penny dreadfuls, shilling shockers, and, still more, the garbage of vulgar weeklies like *Bow Bells* and the *Police Intelligence*".[101]

Hyde also took action. Working first side by side with historians like Eoin Macneill and artists, drawn from both the Protestant and Catholic ranks, Hyde founded the Gaelic League as a movement for the preservation of the disappearing Irish language[102] that would permeate all facets of Irish life and rebuild a modern Gaelic civilisation from within. Hyde believed political independence was meaningless without a cultural individuality to be preserved and fostered,[103] so he created the Gaelic League with the intent of de-Anglicising Ireland by means of the promotion of authentic, home-grown traditions. He devoted his life to the regeneration of the country's fading Gaelic heritage, first as a folklorist and poet, and then as a propagandist. Meanwhile, his Gaelic League, from the 1890s, steadily propagated "the idea of a separate cultural Irish nation".[104] Gaelic Leaguers celebrated Ireland's cultural specificity, engaged in naming rituals and rejected foreign practices and cultural products in order to identify the community to itself, root this identity in everyday life and differentiate it against the background of the cultures of other communities.[105]

At first, the popularity of the Gaelic League originated from its lack of political and religious sectarianism, for it was marked by an inclusive nature that "enabled Protestant to be Irish without being Catholic or separatist".[106] Inevitably, in order to contrast the

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[101] *Bow Bells* was a hybrid of the family magazine and the woman's magazine published by John Dicks in Victorian England: a rival to the *Family Herald*, *Bow Bells* offered thrilling fiction and columns of house management to working- and lower-middle-class girls and women. *Police Intelligence*, on the other hand, catered for a readership hungering for sensational accounts of crimes and disasters.

[102] The census of 1901 had revealed that the number of Irish-speaking monoglots hovered around 38,000 people

[103] John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish National State*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1987, p. 2.

[104] Eamon Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland 1890–1940*, Ulster Historical Foundation, Belfast, 1994, p. xv.

[105] W.J. Argyle, "Size and Scale as Factors in the Development of Nationalist Movements," in A.D. Smith (ed.), *Nationalist Movements*, MacMillan, New York, 1976.

[106] Roy F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*, cit. p. 34. Since his election as president of the Gaelic League in 1893, Hyde endeavoured to keep the association non-political. In the following years, however, the Gaelic League underwent a strong politicisation. Hyde resigned from his office when the majority of its members voted to support the independence of the country in 1915. His resignation is

anglicising influence of the state, cultural revivalists – particularly those involved in the field of youth education – were driven into politics, and many were to become politicised, but they thought of political involvement in non-party terms. For membership of the nation was intended as support to the nation's cultural, economic, social development rather than a something determined by birth, or religious/political affiliation.[107] To express a "love of Ireland" in all its manifestations, Irish names, literature, products, sports were adopted and their English equivalents rejected by the League's members.[108]

The meditations around the corrupting effects of Anglicisation, however, were not confined to the uprooting of the Gaelic language or high expressions of art. Throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, people pondered over aspects of Irish culture and life – other than its linguistic and literature milieu – that had been subject to the forces of Anglicisation. Particularly outspoken were the nationalists, who exposed the threats that Anglicisation posed to Irish purity and morality, especially of the youngsters: in their view, Irish youth had to be weaned from British cultural influence and the imitation of British cultural norms. More importantly, they deprecated the sentiment of superficial sameness propagated by the manifestations of the Anglicising forces as at schools, in recreational associations, in literature, where boys and girls were exposed to the unionist idea.

Irish nationalists deemed crucial to stir the minds and the hearts of Ireland's boys and girls, which had been atrophied – in their own eyes – mainly by the British curriculum taught in National Schools, and by the anglicising fictions featured in the British periodicals intended for juveniles that enjoyed enormous success in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Ireland. Many contributors to the nationalist papers insisted on the need for a reform, amelioration and education of "Young Ireland" – a reform geared to demystify any argument in favour of Ireland's being beneficiary of the 1801 Union with the United Kingdom.

Popular culture and education were then most contested terrains. The relationship between culture and education in the British colonial experience has generated many, often conflicting, historical interpretations. If its promoters extolled it as a liberalising and progressive instrument of the imperialist mission, which could move colonial societies out of darkness and ignorance, some contemporary scholars ventured to term it a "massive cannon

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revealing about the impossibility to continue, in 1915, to exclude politics in the climactic years of nationalist struggle.

[107] John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, cit., p. 153.

[108] *Ibid*., p. 153.

in the artillery of empire".[109] Far from being instrumental to a civilising mission, the colonial policies of education were nothing but *instrumenti regni* for the reproduction of the imperialist social order, the Anglicisation of indigenous culture, and the quelling of nationalistic disorder.[110]

It has been frequently argued that, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the school syllabus of National Schools skirted the issue of the socio-political and cultural differences between Ireland and England, while it equipped Ireland's youth with the skills fundamental to the expanding administrative needs of the Imperial British state. Apparently, the troubled history of the relationship between the two countries provided numerous instances of dissonance, which were incongruous with the assimilationist, integrationist ideology of the British: thus, with a draconian decision only British history was being taught.[111] As an article in *Irish Freedom* reminds us, the syllabus was thickened with British assimilationist ideology:

> In our reading school books we often run across vivid pictures of English bravery and magnanimity, so much so that often we are inclined to regret that we, too, were not born English. The exploits of Clive in India – rather the English accounts of his exploits – tend to make young men envy Englishmen. Similarly the accounts of Nelson looking through the telescope with the blind eye, and the charge of the Light Brigade, rouse within us a certain amount of admiration.[112]

The author of this article polemically pointed out that, in nineteenth-century Ireland, the school curriculum was sanitised of any reference to Irish history and culture, with aim of making "a happy English child" out of an Irish one. I here refer to the poem Irish children recited at morning assemblies, which Dr. Whately adopted at his inspirational motto:

> I thank the goodness and the grace

[109] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, New York, Routledge, 1995, p. 425.
[110] Janette Condon, *"Victoria's Own"? Discourses of Cultural Imperialism and Nationalist Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature in Ireland*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, National University of Ireland, 1999, p. 36.
[111] The teaching of Irish history was introduced in the curriculum of National schools only in 1908, eventually allowing for the discussion of Ireland's history of rebellion. The first outcome was not promising. *Irish Freedom*, for instance, famously complained about the teaching of Irish History as a sub-division of English Literature in the Senior Grade: "The report of the Examiner in Irish History (and English Literature) announces that in the Senior Grade 'Ignorance of Irish history was widespread and profound. Students who expatiated with surprising accuracy on the Unification of Italy, or the Revolution of Jaly, were ludicrously inexact when they came to write of the Volunteers and the United Irishmen". Thus, *Irish Freedom* drew the conclusion that "it is the deliberate policy of many Irish schools *not* to teach their pupils the history of their country". Yet some teachers, influenced by the cultural ferment of the turn of the century, used their history classes to foster an awareness of Irishness as distinct from Englishness in their students.
[112] *Irish Freedom*, January 1911, p. 3.

> That on my birth have smiled:
> And made me in these Christian days
> A happy English child.[113]

Unsurprisingly, Dr. Whately's aim of making every Irish pupil "a happy English child" has attracted the harsh criticism of the nationalists[114] as well as, in recent years, scholarly attention. Declan Kiberd has famously argued that "the Board of Education" had been "a major agent", in Ireland as in India, in "encourag[ing] the materially ambitious native to abandon their culture. These people had been encouraged to view their own great narratives as mere myths to be discarded".[115] Kiberd's words echo those uttered by Irish nationalists at the turn of the twentieth century, when they condemned the curriculum taught at National Schools in so that its content was deeply influenced by English culture and the unionist ideology.

Patrick Pearse devoted the pamphlet *The Murder Machine* to this issue. In describing the English education system in Ireland as a "murder machine", the Easter Riser jettisoned any reticence to expose the pedagogical poverty of Irish schooling and its being used for ideological ends as an agent of colonialism.[116] According to Pearse, education was nothing but a vehicle of cultural assimilation,[117] insofar as it was built on the assumption that Ireland's place was necessarily within the borders of the Empire. At school, students were taught a Nego, consisting in the introjection of the denial of the separateness and difference of Ireland. Pearse's thought is encapsulated in the following passage of *The Murder Machine*, significantly entitled "I Deny":

> I deny the spirituality of my nation; I deny the lineage of my blood; I deny my rights and responsibilities. This Nego is their Credo, this evil their good… to invent such a system of teaching and to persuade us that it is an education system, an Irish education system to be defended by Irishmen against attack, is the most wonderful thing that the English have accomplished in Ireland, and the most wicked.

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[113] From "Ireland under the Union. An Appraisal". Sometimes, though, methods used by the British government to make Irish people forget that they were Irish were more evilly subtle, as in the introduction in 1831 of a national system of primary education which made Irish children learn such a verse as this. http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/0A5_08_Britain_Union.pdf
The lines are drawn from: "A Child's Hymn of Praise" from *Hymns for Infant Minds* (1808) by Jane Taylor.

[114] For instance, in the pages of Eveleen Nicolls's *Nationality in Irish Education* (1910), later discussed in the present section, Dr Whately's claim is interpreted as an evidence of the whole education system being "designed for the crushing of Irish nationality". The quotation is reported from Eveleen C. Nicolls, *Nationality in Irish Education*, M.H. Gill Son LTD., Dublin, 1910, p. 5.

[115] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, cit., p. 148.

[116] Brendan Walsh, *Boy Republic*, cit., p. 26.

[117] In *The Murder Machine*, Pearse also described the English as "too wise a people to attempt to educate the Irish …. As well expect them to arm us".

A sharp critique to Ireland's education system was also expressed by the Gaelic Leaguer Eveleen C. Nicolls, in *Nationality in Irish Education* (1910). In this brief essay – it consists of less than twenty pages – Nicolls argued that the curriculum was designed "entirely on English ideas" and that the Irish systems of education were "consistent in the effort to keep from Irish children all knowledge of the past of their nation and, consequently, all possibility of forming adequate ideals for her future" and to frustrate the natural bond of affection between the child and "his country".[118]

Admittedly, Pearse, Nicolls and their acolytes were not the first to point their fingers against the Board of Education and the syllabus they had implemented. These had already been the target of the nationalists of the first half of the nineteenth century, who had realised that the tenets of unionism and imperialism were infiltrating the subjects studied in Irish schools, with the sanitised teaching of history and geography particularly reinforcing established unionist assumptions.

For instance, Thomas Davis was sensitive to the machinations of the imperial educational crusade for he wrote an essay in 1843, entitled *Schools and Study* which bitterly criticised the system and its administrators, who were "dry, ungenial men", "in love with English literature and character, imperialist to the core", and who had been chosen as Commissioners for their "want of Irish feeling or character". Similar complaints were voiced by William Smith O'Brien, one of the most important Irish nationalists of the mid-nineteenth century. He lamented that the teaching of children in Irish schools "wholly ignore[d] the history of Ireland, and carefully exclude[d] from the circle of their studies everything that can remind them that they are Irish".[119]

Thus, a polemical attitude towards the nation's educational system emerged soon after its own establishment – this was a discourse that ripened through time.[120] Yet, the issue of facing Anglicisation now required a most urgent response.

Patrick Pearse was in the forefront in the promotion of activities aimed at Ireland's youth. Since the early twentieth century, he spurred the Gaelic League to organise *Feisanna*, Irish dancing and singing competitions, for the young.[121] Moreover, Pearse himself devoted

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[118] Eveleen C. Nicolls, *Nationality in Irish Education*, cit., p. 4.
[119] "The Irish Language" published in *The Irishman*, 21 August 1858.
[120] Ann Andrews, *Newspapers and Newsmakers: the Dublin Nationalist Press in the mid-Ninenteeth Century*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2014, p. 14.
[121] Patrick Pearse, "The Children", *An Claideamh Soluis*, 26th November 1904, p. 6. *An Claidheamh Soluis* was the official organ of the Gaelic League and it boasted a wide circulation throughout Ireland and abroad in the first two decades of the twentieth century (it was founded in 1899). Its subscribers came from such diverse parts of the world as continental Europe, South Africa, South America and Australia. Mirroring the goals of the Gaelic League that it represented, the primary concern of the paper was the promotion of Gaelic culture and

most of his adult life to education and schooling,[122] as headmaster, teacher and founder of two schools – St. Enda's and its female equivalent St. Ita's. He believed that just as schooling could be used to enforce governability of long colonised people, so it could become a vehicle of intellectual liberation and, by extension, political freedom.

As demonstrated by Brendan Walsh, his work as educator was markedly political in nature as schooling, in his hands, became a means of resistance to colonial dominance.[123] Some pedagogical choices were in fact political statements, such as the rule that the spoken language of the school was Irish rather than English, to be used in informal exchanges when talking at games, among themselves or with the staff.[124] St. Enda's, the first Catholic high schools conducted by laymen in Ireland, spawned several imitators. In its early years, the school attracted the attention of many leading cultural nationalists of the day, including Standish O'Grady, W.B. Yeats and Douglas Hyde, who became regular visitors and lecturers. Among the supporters of the institution there were also Constance Markievicz, Maud Gonne, Roger Casement, a group that soon grew to include the unexpected Lord Baden-Powell and Rabindranath Tagore.[125]

They strove to achieve what Nicolls identified as the function of education, i.e. to transmit to Ireland's youngsters, "who are to be the men and women of the future, the heritage of the past, and to develop in them those faculties that will enable them to take their part in the march of progress, and to hand on richer and nobler tradition to their descendants".[126] The transmission of the heritage implied to make Ireland's youth aware of its legends, songs, history and literature so as to instil "pride in the past and a sense of responsibility for the future of their country".[127]

Pearse's idea of education, embedded in *The Murder Machine*, was a very broad one. In his view, de-Anglicised periodical literature was an educational instrument that could

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language as a means for regenerating the nation and its people. Therefore, albeit originally written in English, *An Claidheamh Soluis* soon switched to a bilingual format and, in time, it became almost an only Irish language journal.

[122] Pearse himself acknowledged the centrality of educational work in his life in *The Murder Machine*.

[123] Brendan Walsh, *Boy Republic*, cit., pp. 11-12.

[124] Brendan Walsh, *The Pedagogy of Protest. The Educational Thought and Work of Patrick H. Pearse*, Peter Lang, Oxford, 2007, p. 101.

[125] Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots. St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood*, Cork University Press, Cork, 2003, p. 8. By the way, Sisson fails to mention that William Butler Yeats, in a lecture on Tagore, had spoken of the latter's school for Indian boys as "the Indian St. Enda's". In certain respects, Yeats was also the person who attempted to foster a link between the literary and educational initiatives of Pearse and Tagore's, as in 1913 he offered the Headmaster of St. Enda's the opportunity to produce a school play along with one – *The Post Office* (?) – by Tagore, to the production of which the Irish poet "had been looking forward as to an important epoch in the life of the Abbey". See *An Macaomh*, Vol. 2, no. 2, May 1913, p. 9.

[126] Eveleen C. Nicolls, *Nationality in Irish Education*, cit., p. 4.

[127] *Ibidem*.

promote the general amelioration of Irish youth as much as schooling. An insightful element in Pearse's speculation, indeed, was the assertion that juvenile periodical literature had to be employed to spread particularised ideas about Irish nationalism in an agreeable manner. He founded a college paper, *An Macaomh*, which denoted an earnest commitment to national self-determination, conveyed through a literary vehicle that was designed to assure sympathetic attention from boys.

An Macaomh was published at St. Enda's School, Rathmines, but could be ordered also by people not associated with Patrick Pearse's school. In Pearse's plans, it had to be published twice yearly, at mid-summer and at Christmas, but the publication was actually discontinuous due to financial problems: *An Macaomh* was kept slumbering for two years, because Pearse and his staff were absorbed into their efforts to find a way to reduce the debt in which they had incurred when organising the school premises. The 1909 Christmas issue featured contributions by Thomas MacDonagh, Stephen MacKenna and Padraic Colum[128] and illustrations from pen-and-ink drawings by Jack B. Yeats, William's brother. In the introductory "By Way of Comment", Pearse hoped that this magazine would cease to be only a school magazine and started being regarded as a "rallying-point for the thought and aspirations of all those who would bring back again in Ireland that Heroic Age which reserved its highest honour for the hero who had the most childlike heart, for the king who had the largest pity, and for the poet who visioned the truest image of beauty".

Thus, in Pearse's view, periodical literature, education and sporting culture were seen as weapons of empire, which, nonetheless, might be remodelled and turned back upon its originators. As Brendan Walsh has convincingly demonstrated, Patrick Pearse's ideas on education, and his concomitant views on juvenile periodicals, stand out as a body of theory fundamental to a deep understanding of the nationalists' interest in the matter at the turn of the twentieth century.[129]

For instance, nationalists shared with Pearse a chief common preoccupation with the deluge of trashy literature from Britain. Those contributing to the nationalist periodicals and newspapers cautioned their readers to regard the British periodicals modelled on the *Boys' Own Paper* as a corrupting force, alienating the Irish youngsters from their own culture. They lamented the brainwashing of the youth's mind with the offal and garbage of British magazines intended for juveniles and of the penny dreadfuls.

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[128] At times, both Colum and MacDonagh were teacher at St. Enda's, respectively of English Literature and Irish Literature.

[129] Walsh, Brendan. *Boy Republic: Patrick Pearse and Radical Education*; Foreword by Declan Kiberd. Dublin, History Press Ireland, 2013.

This latter type of cheap literature was successful on both sides of the Irish sea. According to E.S. Turner, in Victorian England the young from the labour classes loved the cheap publications detailing the misdeeds of offenders and highwaymen, stories sometimes based on real-life facts: "they wanted to read about fiery individualists, men of spirit who defied harsh laws and oppressive officialdom, even though they finished at the end of a hempen rope".[130] Patrick Howarth and John Springhall, among others, have partially corrected this statement, by observing that the readership of penny dreadfuls and other cheap magazines grew to include a sizeable proportion of the male middle and upper classes.[131] This cross-sectional preference was noticeable among the young Irish readers of the beginning of the twentieth century as well. [132]

To the nationalist, however, sources of considerable anxiety were also some more respectable British magazines. Ireland was then part of the British distributive system and, therefore, British juvenile reading material could boast of a wide circulation in the island.[133] For instance, in the article "The Return of the Fianna" published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* on 27th March 1909, the author praised the education provided by St. Enda's to its pupils inasmuch as it gave them the chance to become familiar with myths and legends they would not usually have been exposed to; otherwise, they would have known "only 'Tom Brown', 'Dick Turpin' and 'Crusoe'".[134]

Likewise, snippets in the memoirs or autobiographies of Irishmen born at the end of the nineteenth century or a bit later show these men remembering reading English magazines in their youth. Many strands of the life of Irish youth were then 'anglicised', including sport and popular literature. In an oft-quoted passage of *Dublin Made Me* (1979), C.S. Andrews remembers being taken to a "review in the Castle to celebrate the King's birthday", together

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[130] E.S. Turner, *Boys will be Boys*, Michael Joseph, 1948.

[131] Patrick Howarth, *Play up and Play the Game: the Heroes of Popular Fiction*, Methuen, London, 1973, p. 36. John Springhall, "Disseminating Impure Literature", cit.

[132] Admittedly, also in England the penny dreadfuls and the likes were the target of harsh criticism, they being deemed immoral. In the preface to E.S. Turner's *Boys Will Be Boys*, the scholar C.B. Fry states that "in all ages in which young people have been exposed to new forms of art or entertainment designed to appeal to the masses there has been a widespread alarm to the likely effect on their morals"; a kind of alarm that was renewed in mid-nineteenth century England, when "reformers and crusaders fought for the spiritual welfare of young readers of fiction. […] They did not do so by procuring a ban on penny dreadfuls. Instead they provided alternative forms of literature with the express intention of winning young readers from a kind of writing of which they disapproved to one which they considered healthy". This extract is quoted in Howarth, cit., p. 47.

[133] Free public libraries were not widespread in rural Ireland, being mostly located in urban areas. In 1915, a report by Professor W.G.S: Adams of Oxford University stated that only 28 per cent of Irish people were served by municipal libraries, a striking figure if compared to the equivalent of 62 per cent referring to the English population. In this cultural vacuum, newsagents and private lending libraries flourished, and they thrived on a wealth of weekly newspapers, periodicals and cheap novel, which were sold in abundance and came from Britain.

[134] "The Return of the Fianna", *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 27th March 1909, p. 11.

with all "the thousands who turned up to see it": then, "Dublin was an English city."[135] Andrews's and his friends' leisure reading was also distinctly British in flavour, as evidenced by the former recalling that

> From the comics we read, *Chips*, *Comic Cuts*, and later the *Magnet* and the *Gem* and the *Union Jack*, we absorbed the correct British imperial attitudes to the `Fuzzy Wuzzies', the `Niggers' and the Indian Nabobs […] soccer football was the game talked of and played everywhere on the vacant lots in the city. In cricket we followed the fortunes of Surrey and Kent, Hobbs and Hayward […]. Our nursery rhymes were English and we knew all about Dick Whittington, Robin Hood and Alice in Wonderland, but we never heard of Fionn or Cuchulainn.[136]

Similar observations were also voiced by the writer Frank O'Connor in the autobiographical *An Only Child* (1961). Here the author cast light on the cultural dislocation, self-negation and alienation experienced – albeit unconsciously – by Irish young readers at the turn of the twentieth century as he recalled how his early childhood "was saturated with imperial fictions and felt that his spiritual homeland was England, for it was the home of all the imaginary friends whom he daily encountered in magazines such as *The Gem*, *The Magnet* and *The Boy's Own Paper*".[137] Janette Condon offered us an insightful analysis on O'Connor feelings of cultural ambivalence, as she explained:

> Having inhabited this scripted 'country of the mind' he gives the impression that he felt true reality to exist only in the imperial motherland, and records that he strove to 'be worthy' of this world from the penny weeklies by 'playing cricket with a raggy ball and an old board hacked into shape for a bat […] by shadow boxing before the mirror in the kitchen, and practicing the deadly straight left with which the hero knocked out the bully of the school […] and even adopting the public-school code for [his] own. His own reality in Cork seemed somehow unworthy, for it was never spoken of nor written about in schools nor in books and this in turn helped to set up the self-negating disjunction between the world of his imagination and daily Irish reality he so avidly describes in the work.[138]

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[135] See also the autobiography of Sean O'Faolain *Vive moi!*, where he recalled a Sunday morning ritual from his childhood in Cork City. His father, a local Royal Irish Constabulary constable, would lead Sean and his brothers to Wellington Barracks where they would join the loyal citizen of Edwardian Cork in saluting the church parade of the local British Army regiment.

[136] *Ibid*. The polemical Nicolls, in *Nationality in Irish Education*, made a similar point when stating that Ireland's youth was "given tales of Robin Hood, of William Tell; they delight in the anecdotes of Alfred and the burnt cakes, of Canute bidding the waves retire, of Robert Bruce and the spider; but with a consistency worthy of a better cause, every heroic figure from Ireland's history or literature is kept from their ken". The quotation is reported from Eveleen C. Nicolls, *Nationality in Irish Education*, cit., p. 7.

[137] Frank O'Connor, *An Only Child and My Father's Son: An Autobiography*, Penguin, London, 2005.

[138] Janette Condon, '"A Quaking Sod': Ireland, Empire and Children's Literary Culture" in P. J. Matthews (ed.), *New Voices in Irish Criticism*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2000, p. 192.

The watershed in O'Connor's life was the encounter with Daniel Corkery, the teacher who awakened the nine-year-old's enthusiasm for the hitherto despised language and literature of his country. Corkery introduced him to the cultural and literary heritage of Ireland. O'Connor's passion was first rekindled by reading the Cuchulain saga and, later, by joining the Gaelic League in the aftermath of 1916. The passion never weakened out and in 1923, when imprisoned in a Republican internment camp, he began the Gaelic translations that brought him AE and Yeats's attention in 1925.[139]

Interestingly, Daniel Corkery, Frank O'Connor's "first love," wrote scathing observations on the pernicious influence of English literature on Irish boys and girls. In *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (1931), he reflected that since the periodicals read in Ireland were British and thus focused on "the life of another people", the Irish child was not facilitated to "understand both himself and his surroundings'.[140] Ireland was then lacking "a national literature written primarily for its own people: every new book in it – no matter what its theme, foreign or native – is referable to their life, and its literary traits to the traits already established in the literature. The critical opinion of the people of the nation's self is the warrant of life or death for it".[141] The lack of truly national literature deeply affected the imagination and life of Irish people, entailing more deleterious consequences in the case of the youths. As seen in O'Connor's pages, the overpowering force of British culture and periodical literature made the life in Cork, Dublin and the rest of Ireland secondary. On this aspect, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* contains a passage worth quoting almost in its full-length:

> Everywhere in the mentality of the Irish people are flux and uncertainty. Our national consciousness may be described, in a native phrase, as a quaking sod. It gives no footing. It is not English, nor Irish, nor Anglo-Irish; as will be understood if one thinks a while on the thwarting it undergoes in each individual child of the race as he grows into manhood. Though not quite true, let us take it that the Irish-born child is as Irish in his instincts, in his emotions, as the English child is English: the period of education comes on: all that the English child learns buttresses, while it refines, his emotional nature. Practically all the literature he reads focuses for him the mind of his own people; so also does the instruction he hears. At a later stage if he come to read a foreign language he seizes what he reads in it with an English mind. He has something of his own by which to estimate its value for him. How different with the Irish child! No sooner does he

[139] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, cit., p. 98. O'Connor's autobiography well exemplified what Liam Harte defined as "the central structural metaphor of twentieth-century Irish autobiographies", namely "the tendency to explore and define oneself in terms of patriotic values and national goals, to equate one's development with national destiny". See: Liam Harte, *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2007, p. 123.
[140] Daniel Corkery, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* [manuscript], archival material preserved in the University College Cork's Special Collections, UC/DC/137 (2), p. 3.
[141] *Ibid.*

> begin to use his intellect than what he learns begins to undermine, to weaken, and to harass his emotional nature. For practically all that he reads is English – what he reads in Irish is not yet worth taking account of. It does not therefore focus the mind of his own people, teaching him the better to look about him, to understand both himself and his surroundings. It focuses instead the life of another people. Instead of sharpening his gaze upon his own neighbourhood, his reading distracts it, for he cannot find in these surroundings what his reading has taught him is the matter worth coming upon. His surroundings begin to seem unvital. His education, instead of buttressing and refining his emotional nature, teaches him rather to despise it, inasmuch as it teaches him not to see the surroundings out of which he is sprung, as they are in themselves, but as compared with alien surroundings: his education provides him with an alien medium through which is henceforth to look at his native land! At the least his education sets up a dispute between his intellect and his emotions. Nothing happens in the neighbourhood of an English boy's home that he will not sooner or later find happening, transfigured, in literature. What happens in the neighbourhood of an Irish boy's home - the fair, the hurling match, the land grabbing, the *priesting*, the mission, the Mass - he never comes on in literature, that is, in such literature as he is told to respect and learn. Evidently what happens in his own fields is not stuff for the Muses! In his riper years he may come to see the crassness of his own upbringing, as, doubtless, T.C. Murray and Padraic Colum see it. [...] In the case of writers sprung from the people, what creates the difficulty is the overwhelming prestige of English culture in all Irish scholastic systems, and therefore in Irish life generally. [...].[142]

As we gather from Corkery's comments *Gem*, *Magnet*, and the other magazines modelled on *The Boys' Own Paper* were even more threatening than the penny dreadfuls, as they propagated a sameness. Irish children and youths did not face what Seamus Deane has termed "the central psychological aspect of the colonial problem", i.e. "the contradiction of living politically as if it were one thing while culturally knowing itself to be another":[143] they had to be made to grasp the cultural specificity of their country and, by extension, to conceive political separateness. British magazines were regarded as powerful *instrumenti regni* insofar as they exerted a tenacious hold on the imagination of Irish juveniles, perpetuating the glorious fiction of the Union that Irish children were Queen Victoria's – or, later, King Edward's – own.[144]

Rather than ignoring the sister-kingdom of Ireland as was the case with the national educational system, numerous English writers tried their hand at a kind of fiction that held Ireland as a strategic partner in the Empire's plans. For instance, Irish characters appear as both primary and secondary heroes and characters in Henty's *Orange and Green*, *In the Irish Brigade*, *With Moore at Corunna* and *Under Wellington's Command*, while many of Kingston's 'midshipman' stories of the imperial navy include Irish characters such as in

[142] *Ibid*., pp. 14-15.
[143] Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals. Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980*, Wake Forest University Press, Winston-Salem, 1987, p. 12.
[144] Janette Condon, *"Victoria's Own"?*, cit., p. 22.

Paddy Finn and the *Heir of Kilfinnan*. From the point of view of Irish nationalists, one problematic aspect was that these stories often stereotypically depicted Irish characters as hot-tempered, prone to guerrilla fighting.[145] Even more problematic was the fact that this Irish propensity to guerrilla warfare soon became acceptable, provided it was carried out in her Majesty's service rather than in resistance to it. The hot-tempered Irish were described as channelling the physical prowess for the right cause, the defence of the Empire, and rallying to the Empire when faced with opponents from without.

The number of authors who depicted problematic – in the nationalists' eyes – Irish characters includes Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Doyle is best known for creating the character of Sherlock Holmes, but in his vast literary production he also explored Irish themes – and sometimes dealt with the Irish Question – in stories such as *That Little Square Box*, *The Heiress of Glenmahowley*, and *The Green Flag*. In the latter,[146] Doyle, lingers on the cultural and "racial" difference between the English and the Irish, but he still suggests that differences "can be accommodated, and even exploited, by the imperial regime".

The Green Flag tells the story of Private Dennis Connolly who enrols into the British Army and leaves for Sudan with his new regiment. Republican and hot-tempered, Connolly there becomes an instigator of trouble, who stubbornly refuses to obey the officers' orders. Yet, when a British force is overcome by attacking dervishes, Connolly changes his mind, rallies the Irish contingent to the defence of the Empire, and dies saving the day. The morale is encapsulated in the story's conclusion:

> For Irish regiments have before now been disaffected, and have at a distance looked upon the foe as though he might, in truth, be the friend; but when they have been put face on to him, and when their officers have dashed to the front with a wave and halloo, those rebel hearts have softened and their gallant Celtic blood has boiled with the mad Joy of the fight, until the slower Britons have marvelled that they ever could have doubted the loyalty of their Irish comrades.

The nationalists obviously resented the fact that this type of fiction, created for the British leisure market, was also made available to Irish boys. Sometimes, the resentment for the inherent dangerousness of British youth papers was directed against one man alone: Alfred Harmsworth, the press baron who controlled *The Times*, the Daily Mail and numerous

[145] There is general consensus over the assumption that racism and racial stereotyping were not alien to serialised works for boys. In the magazine significantly titled *Boys of England*, the popular character Jack Harkaway, a schoolboy later to become a captain of hussars in the South African War, is often attributed harsh comments against foreign-looking fellow pupils: "You're not a true Englishman", he says in one episode, "There's a touch of the tarbrush about you which shows you are not a white man".

[146] *The Green Flag and Other Stories of War and Sport* is a volume collecting 15 short stories written by Arthur Conan Doyle published on 27 March 1900.

juvenile publications. Harmsworth was described as an "evil genius" determined to feed human weaknesses by giving them "triviality or gross idiocy" and as the ultimate affront he was even compared to the cursed Cromwell, being bestowed the infamous title of "the Cromwell of journalese".[147] However, all the magazines modelled after the *Boys' Own Paper* were seen as a threat, an instrument buttressing British ideology.

It was deemed easy for Irish boys to become Empire-worshippers when gorging on the periodical literature coming from Britain. In 1901, an anonymous contributor to the *United Irishman* argued that boys were "potential heroes, and are essentially hero-worshippers", prone to identify themselves with the man of action. G.A. Henty was quoted as the author "whose influence is most damaging", because he always held up the Englishman as a model, with endless references to his patriotism, glorious heritage and "civilising mission".[148] If boys ended up dreaming about the imperial enterprise, girls were deluded by cheap fictions in which a young lady gets married to a rich and titled suitor. Adventure tales set in the colonies as well as poor quality stories inspired by Jane Eyre and Jane Austen's novels were the polemical target of an article published in *Bean na hEireann* in 1909:

> For years we have been listening to people deploring the deluge of trashy foreign literature in Ireland. The fact that is published and printed in England is the least of its faults. The English atmosphere it brings with it, and the false and mean standard of life that it inculcates is the real evil. The chance of marrying a very rich, and a very much titled suitor, the triumph of being able to hold a larger number of fellow-creatures in servitude than your neighbour – the dishonest pleasure of having command of a huge income, sweated out of the bones of less fortunate human beings – these are the paltry ideals set out before our young Irish women.[149]

There was no Irish periodical to counterbalance the deleterious influence of these stories featured in British magazines. Both the anonymous author of the *United Irishman* article and the contributor to *Bean na hEireann* recognised the urgent need for such a paper. This,

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[147]Ben Novick, "Advanced Nationalist Propaganda and Moralistic Revolution. 1914-1918," cit., pp. 45 and 51. The quoted extracts are respectively drawn from: *Irishman*, 8 December 1917, p. 4 and *Nationality*, 24 July 1915, p. 5. Moreover, when not corrupting morals, the always-criticised Harmsworth was accused of promoting a "healthy Imperial outlook" among young readers. Admittedly, the accusations of promoting imperialism were not farfetched. As early as 1973, Howarth observed that in all of the magazines for boys published by the Amalgamated Press, "patriotism and belief in the imperial mission were unvarying features of editorial policy"; hardly a surprise if one takes into account that the editors expressly stated that "the boys' papers of the Amalgamated Press […] encouraged physical strength, patriotism, interest in travel and exploration, and pride in the empire". Moreover, the phraseology of the characters launched by the Amalgamated Press was thick with deplorable stereotyping of foreigners and colonized natives.

[148] Quoted in Pádraic Frehan, *Education and Celtic Myth: National Self-image and Schoolbooks in 20th Century Ireland*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2012, p. 42.

[149] *Bean na hEireann*, Editorial Notes, April 1909, p. 8.

indeed, became a hot topic in Ireland at the turn of the century. Nationalist writers began to insist on the need for "de-anglicising" fictions and periodicals, thus creating a sense amongst many other nationalists that Irish boys and girls needed to be viewed as a necessary audience in their resistance to cultural and political imperialism in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland. It was unwise to be snobbish about the introduction of home-grown substitutes of the likes of *Gem* into the Irish publishing market.[150]

Soon those thoughts translated into actions. Paving the way for the creation of truly Irish periodicals – meant to circulate among and, hopefully, well beyond the circle of usual periodical-buying public – were the columns dedicated to young readers in the periodicals bought by their parents. For instance, the monthly *Irish Freedom*, launched in November 1910, was a publication aimed at an adult audience, but nonetheless featured a column for readers under twenty that was entitled *The Sunroom of Youth*. In the same years, *Bean na hÉireann* launched a column dedicated to Irish girls, while the *Weekly Freeman* inaugurated *The Fireside Club*. In particular, the column in *Bean na hÉireann* was entitled "An Grianán" and written under the pseudonym Dectora by Madeleine ffrench-Mullen, the co-founder of St Ultan's Hospital for Infants, whereas the *Irish Fireside Club* remained attached for most of its lifespan to the *Weekly Freeman* and spread over half a page at the peak of its popularity. It imbued thousands of youths with the desire to educate themselves and each other for the prosperity of Ireland, also contributing to supply the Gaelic League with several young language enthusiasts, who had familiarised themselves with the study of Irish language, history, and literature by reading the column.[151]

All of the above-mentioned columns shared some distinctive characteristic, which I am going to illustrate by providing some information about *The Sunroom of Youth*, because the column featured in *Irish Freedom* indeed well exemplifies the main defining

[150] Nationalists were aware of the importance of the press as one of the main methods for constructing national identity, a notion that reminds us of Benedict Anderson's insights in his *Imagined Communities* (1983). In this influential work, Anderson put emphasis on the role played by print capitalism in establishing a national consciousness that transcended immediate geographical boundaries of interaction, inasmuch as, in the first European state-nations, the mass circulation of books and newspapers contributed to the people's identification as members of the same nation, namely a community of individuals sharing a mental image of their affinity. Anderson's insights – later reiterated, among others, by Linda Colley in her studies in the field of British national identity – prove to be productive when analysing the impact of the Irish nationalist press on the awakening of a political nationalist consciousness in Ireland since the mid-nineteenth century, when *The Nation* began to disseminate nationalist rhetoric and mobilise public opinion. Newspapers were crucial for the articulation of the concept of Irish nationalism and the main medium for its popularisation not only among the women and men in Ireland, but throughout the diasporic Irish communities in Great Britain and America as well. This was not lost upon those nationalists of the turn of the century, who regarded the press and literature as powerful forces, essential to wage a battle against the British government.

[151] Ríona Nic Congáil, "'Fiction, Amusement, Instruction': The *Irish Fireside Club* and the Educational Ideology of the Gaelic League", *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2009, p. 91.

characteristics of this publishing genre. *The Sunroom of Youth* was written by a woman under the pseudonym of Neasa. Through this column, the editors aimed to make youths aware of the cultural separateness of Ireland as this awareness was seen as conducive to the kindling of political separatist feelings in the young readership. Indeed, the ultimate goal was national independence, the attainment of which was dependent on the strength of the commitment of the country's youth. The editors and contributors of Irish Freedom clearly feared the indifference of youngsters to Ireland's depreciable lot. In "An Appeal to the Younger Readers of Irish Freedom", the editor blamed their "indifference […] to the political servitude which oppresses their country is a serious feature of Irish life" – he blamed that "the vast majority of young Irishmen do not apparently care a brass farthing what the fate of the country may be", because "indifferents of this class do harm in many ways [by leading other] young people into their own ways of looking at things, and, if some stronger influence is not brought to bear, the young also turn indifferent and help to spread the leprosy in the strong places of Irish nationality".[152]

This scenario had to be averted at all cost, because "it is the duty of every Irish youth to be up and doing something for the Motherland, for 'Ireland cannot afford to lose a man'".[153] In the first article of *The Sunroom of Youth*, Neasa outlined the work ahead and asserted her trust in Irish youths,

> On you, her young uncompromising bodyguard, our Mother Eire has placed her hopes. Your duty it must be to stand by her and defend her, to succour and cheer her, at every hour and in every danger until the day comes when you and those who must sooner or later rally to our call, can strike the blow that will free her for ever from the thraldom of the English robbers.[154]

Neasa encouraged her readers to study Irish history and tested their knowledge through a series of essay competitions on topics such as "Your favourite Irish hero". These monthly competitions served two other purposes: first, by offering them a book prize, the competition organisers prompt the curiosity of Ireland's youth in their country's history; in keeping with this objective, Neasa also tried to compensate for the inadequacy of the national educational system by publishing, in instalments, a short history of the period between the rise of the Volunteer Movement and the end of Emmet's insurrection: "the period covered is that on which an examination is held for the Third Class Test. Much difficulty has been experienced

[152] *Irish Freedom*, December 1911, p. 7.
[153] *Irish Freedom*, June 1912, p. 3.
[154] *Irish Freedom*, December 1910, p. 6.

in conducting history classes on account of the lack of suitable textbooks covering the period required for the Tests, and it is hoped that difficult will soon be overcome".[155] Second, by publishing the winning essays, Neasa and *Irish Freedom* fostered the potential of boys and girls to become nationalist propagandists themselves in order to spawn imitators. In fact, the young readers of Irish Freedom were supposed to "teach the younger children Ireland's History; inspire them with love for their native land; teach them to scorn the slavish 'leaders'; and fire their souls with patriotism, and unceasing loyalty to Ireland […] from hurling Clubs and join the Gaelic League".[156] Nationalist, anti-British feelings were expressed with no reticence at all. For instance, many of the articles of *The Sunroom of Youth* were devoted to attacks against the King's visit to Ireland, because the English "are as much robbers to-day as they were in the days of Elizabeth and Cromwell, and their representative – king, queen, viceroy, or anybody else – has no claim whatever on anything but the contempt and detestation of the Irish people. [157]

As mentioned before, the column dedicated to the youths in *Bean na hEireann* and the one tilted *Fireside Club* were really similar to *The Sunroom of Youth*. More importantly, *The Sunroom of Youth* and the columns dedicated to young readers in *Bean na hEireann* and the *Weekly Freeman*, along with Patrick Pearse's *An Macaomh*, supplied the formula for truly Irish papers that could compete with their British – and more established – counterparts. Irish nationalists took an active interest in promoting home-grown substitutes for the examples of British popular culture such as *The Gem* and *Magnet*. At last, in the rapidly evolving paper landscape of the 1910s, four periodicals for the Irish youths were established. Competing for the cultural allegiance of the Irish youth there were *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's*. All of them promulgated nationalist values and the de-Anglicisation of the country by waging a battle of images and words against their British counterparts. The contributors to these periodicals faced the challenge of laying the foundations of a new state which, they hoped, would deliver not merely the independence, but would also champion the nationalist values. At the same time, they strove to identify a model embodying all the essential virtues and qualities of the desirable future Irish citizen.

[155] *Irish Freedom*, June 1914, p. 2.
[156] *Irish Freedom*, June 1912, p. 3.
[157] *Irish Freedom*, July 1911, p. 3.

II.b General Features

Admittedly, a number of manuscript papers appeared and disappeared during the revolutionary years besides the four that I am going to analyse. Indeed, from the correspondence page of *St. Enda's* we learned that a plethora of manuscript papers was produced in those days, including the one titled *Ag Gabhail Timpal*. This "a manuscript magazine, the objects of which are to bring Gaels into touch with each other, encourage use of the Irish language, and promote discussion of matters affecting literary, social, and Irish Ireland work".[158] However, no comprehensive list of the manuscript story papers then produced in Ireland yet exists, a lacuna attesting to the elusiveness and precariousness of this reading material. Manuscript periodicals were characterised by a transient nature and were not designed for durability: since they were manuscripts, they were extremely small in circulation – even if their circulation figures cannot be known, we gather that they were unable to acquire a steady readership – poorly-designed and short-lived. These story papers were papers on cheap paper and with paper, rather than cardboard, covers. Moreover, reconstructing the genealogy and development of manuscript papers is further complicated by the general lack of information about the key people connected with these editorial enterprises. Therefore, the absence of such a list is easily explained in that much of the paper landscape has been irretrievably lost.

Admittedly, the years of the Great War were not a propitious time to venture into a new editorial enterprise. Holding the reins of an Irish magazine was quite a daunting task in the 1910s and 1920s. Throughout all these years, editors came to face serious and numerous problems, ranging from the wartime rationing that resulted in a shortage of paper – and thus the paper quality diminished, and printing runs were smaller than they used to be – to British censorship.

Military raids were not infrequent and the establishment of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) in August 1914 made life difficult for the so-called 'seditious' press, which now needed approval from the Board of Trade to circulate. Therefore, in December 1914,

[158] *St. Enda's*, July 1919, p. 286. In the next issue, we can gather further information about this manuscript paper, as *St. Enda's* featured the following notice, which harshly criticised the editorial enterprise: "Ag Gabhail Timpal". Just as we go to Press, this M.S. Magazine reaches us. We will be candid with the patriotic and energetic editor. There is really nothing new in it from beginning to end – nothing that cannot be found in the Irish Ireland newspapers and reviews. The editor is hard-working, but we fear a great deal of his labour is wasted as the public reached by his Magazine is already converted, and, besides, the time allowed for the reading of the Magazine is too short". *St. Enda's*, August 1919, p. 303.

the British government suppressed *Sinn Féin*, *Irish Freedom* and the *Irish Worker*,[159] because they had waged a battle of words and images against their British counterparts. In later months, the same destiny fell upon papers like the nationalist *Scissors and Paste* and the labour *The Worker*, both forced to cease publication in February 1915. Inevitably, the Easter Rising brought about a tightening in press censorship that lasted well after the end of the First World War, when the country precipitated into the Anglo-Irish conflict. Between 1916 and 1919, the Irish Press Censorship Office, first directed by Lord Decies and later on by Major Bryce Cooper, placed Irish newspapers under close scrutiny while enforcing DORA press regulations. Editors and publishers were asked – but not compelled – to submit proofs of their work before printing it, and they had to take into account that the publication of seditious reading material as well as other matter which might demoralise people was strictly forbidden. Until 1921, newspapers and periodicals with separatist sympathies suffered the consequences of these strict regulations.[160] The editor of *St. Enda's* was even "ruthlessly taken from those who loved and rivered [*sic*] him, and cast into prison in the land of the Gall".[161]

Evidence is contained in a notice published by *Our Boys*, which is also illustrative of the ethos of mutual support obtaining in the world of nationalist press. The notice is quoted below:

> Many readers are urging us to make *Our Boys* a weekly. Under present conditions this is impossible, the price of material and cost of production being prohibitive. The war over, one doesn't know what might happen" "In the meantime, readers must not forget that there are published in Ireland several excellent weekly and monthly papers, and all at a cheap rate. Among them is *Young Ireland*, which is a little gem and suitable for Irish boys and girls. Why not get these?[162]

The cooperation between editors and journalists of different papers was a way to partially overcome these obstacles: papers, aimed both to a young and adult readership, frequently

[159] Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War, and the Geography of Remembrance*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.
[160] Virginia E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press. Ireland, 1900*-1922, cit., pp. 159-160.
[161] *St. Enda's*, October 1918, p. 98. And in May 1923, the paper announced that its editor had been arrested for another time "because of his faith in the old cause". See *St. Enda's*, May 1923, p.14.
[162] *Our Boys*, January 1918, p. 123. There is, though, a notable exception: during the First World War, *Fianna* buried in a welter of heavy-handed sarcasm the pro-enlistment activities of *Our Boys*.

reprinted columns, poems and articles of other organs in a mutual exchange, while new emerging papers were greeted as welcome additions to the press landscape.[163]

> last but not least, we can do our little best to push the sale of *Eire Og*, and thus to do away with the trashy English literature with which our country has been flooded for so long, and which has done so much harm to our boys and girls.

To a certain degree, the act of mutual double publication was a means to wittily escape into print. Thus, indeed, *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda* managed to cater for both the delight and instruction of Ireland's youth. More specifically, each one catered for a specific segment of the Irish young readership.

The selected juvenile papers, though all upholding nationalist values, reveal a great variety of opinion that mirrors the broad spectrum of both Irish nationalism – marked by various shades of persuasions – and the intellectual ferment at the time. The term nationalism, indeed, encompassed a wide range of views: thus, a paper such as *Our Boys*, which emerged in the 1910s, advocated the de-Anglicisation of Ireland at the cultural level, while maintaining a distinctive constitutional stance; at the other end of the spectrum, the short-lived *Fianna* called for the complete separation from England: culturally and politically. This multiplicity of views, in turn, mirrored the bitter controversies flowing out of the political vacuum left by Charles Stewart Parnell in 1890, when he was repudiated by the Irish Party after the O'Shea divorce scandal. Dissident voices began to rise and the Irish population was split into several factions: the supporters of Home Rule, those placing social and economic development above it, and the radical advanced nationalists. Almost each of the numerous segments of the nationalist spectrum had its own organ through which trying to influence the opinion of younger readers.

However, there were differences as well as similarities. The target audience of all papers was made up of boys – especially boys – and girls on the brink of adult age. Indeed, "boyhood is the golden age of habit formation. The habits then formed stick through life. New habits may, of course, at any time be formed, and old habits corrected, but the habits formed in boyhood remain a hindrance or on aid to happiness. The boy is father to the man in the sense, that the boy comes before the man."[164] Instead, most of the contributors to the story papers were the rank and file of the several nationalist factions, and their writings

[163] Ben Novick, "Advanced Nationalist Propaganda and Moralistic Revolution. 1914-1918," in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002, p. 36.
[164] *Our Boys*, 29 September 1932, p. 82.

reflected their own experiences, ambitions regarding Ireland and concerns for their own children or siblings.

Moreover, *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* all highlighted with growing intensity the cultural individuality of their nation, dichotomising Ireland from England. They consciously followed in the steps of the great revivals of the past, those of the mid-eighteenth century and of the experimentations of the Young Ireland movement.[165] The first formulation of Ireland as a country endowed with a specific creative power has to be related to the endeavours of mid-eighteenth antiquarians who advocated a rejection of the defamatory English images of the Irish past and a return to the authenticity of feelings as expressed in the culture of their ancestors. Clergymen, gentlemen and amateur historians developed and simultaneously stimulated an enthusiasm for Irish ancient mythology and the past world of the British Isles' Celts, through works such as Macpherson's *Ossian*. This tradition was historical and literary, putting emphasis on original documents and manuscripts. Its leading figures were inspired by their respect for the memorials of Irish past and the desire to preserve and hand them on to the following generations, as a source of inspiration for the blossoming of this ancient culture in the future. Seldom was political separation envisaged, though, as demands for acknowledging Ireland's originality and its equal status at the cultural level with Britain and other European powers were more common.

Instead, a programme of both political and cultural action was implemented by the Young Ireland movement.[166] Its leading figures were Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy and John Blake Dillon, who founded the independent weekly newspaper the *Nation,* their vehicle for constructing a separate Irish identity. They saw themselves as leading and articulating the collective will of the Irish people. Their newspaper asserted the presence of an Irish national identity that was separate from Britain, and urged the need for its protection against a growing tide of Anglicization, especially since the Great Famine. They expressed the right and the need of the Irish people to make laws for themselves, to be independent of what they perceived as a highly unjust and illegitimate British government.[167] They also wished for a regeneration of Irish life by means of a large-scale return to its traditional

[165] I here draw on Joseph Hutchinson's distinction of three phases in Irish cultural nationalism.
[166] Joseph Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, cit., p. 76.
[167] Ann Andrews, *Newspapers and Newsmakers*, cit., p. 6.

literature, lore and language, while combining this desire with the retrieval of Wolfe Tone's tradition of revolutionary nationalism.[168]

In their capacity as editors, they supported a wide range of cultural activities – early Irish literature was translated, a band and a choir to perform ballads they published was established. Their cultural imperative also led them to start, in 1845, the Library of Ireland, a series of volumes meant to widespread Irish history and culture among the population. The cultural polemic of Thomas Davis plays a central significance in the history of Irish nationalism as he both responded to, and simultaneously created, the demands of an emergent nationalism.[169]

Their cultural polemic also provided twentieth-century nationalists with a blueprint. The modern periodicals set out to search for authentic Irish products, a mission that invested literature as well. Irish authors were polemical concerning English literature, which they wanted to replace with its Irish counterpart. At times, bitterness underlay the papers' discussions of English literature. One editor of *Young Ireland*, Maire nic Chearbaille, verged on the point of chauvinism in comments such as "it is worth contrasting Dante's exquisite pride and refinement here expressed with the non-Catholic coarseness of Shakespeare and other English literary figures, whose works (God help us) are used for educational purposes in Irish Catholic schools instead of Dante and his like."[170]

Likewise, many contributors noted that the reading public had given a most fervent admiration to the works of Lord Tennyson, conferred on 19th November 1850 with the title of Poet Laureate. Yet, his reputation came to suffer enormously among the Irish nationalists, who made him their own polemical target. In their view, Tennyson's work embodied a derogatory attitude towards Irish people, society and culture. In *Young Ireland*, the above-mentioned columnist professed herself unable to find a positive aspect in the whole of Tennyson's oeuvre. For Maire nic Chearbaille, Tennyson – a "bumptious, ignorant, and irreverent snob" – was not only racist in his attitudes towards the Irish, but also disrespectful to women in *The Princess*.[171] This issue brought upby Maire nic Chearbaille is also

[168] John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, cit., p. 96.
[169] David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland*, cit., p. 22.
[170] *Young Ireland*, 30th June 1917, p. 6.
[171] *Young Ireland*, 2nd June 1917, p. 7. In a following issue, on the 14th of July, nic Chearbaille continued her polemic against Tennyson, defined "a snob, an ignoramus, an anti-Christian pantheist, a jingo and anti-feminist savage". See *Young Ireland*, 14th July 1917, p. 3.

amplified by the editor´s notes, when it is asked why the Irish should study anti-Catholic authors.[172]

The obvious solution to this puzzle was to substitute deplorable English Literature with a truly Irish literature. Thomas Davis, in the 1840s, had provided the Irish readership with an alternative set of popular cultural products to those then streaming from the presses of England.[173] Davis was a prolific and versatile poet with a talent for rhyme and rhythm, but, today, only an inordinately generous critic would be likely to grant him much else. His verses are usually characterised by artistic poverty and banality – the latter is perhaps the predominant quality in Davis's poetry. However, these verses struck a note with their readers in the 1840s and with the latter-day readers of the early twentieth century. His poetry was retrieved after the failure of Parnell, when, as Declan Kiberd noted "a younger generations of intellectuals turned from politics back to culture and to the teachings of Thomas Davis".[174] Therefore, his importance in the two historical periods, fraught with political tensions, should be evaluated taking into account the poems' messages rather than their artistic merit. His ballads were unashamedly didactic, but proved to be extremely successful.

As Seamus Deane observed, the ballad occupies a privileged position in modern Irish politics – particularly, from the Great Famine to Sinn Féin's triumph in the General Elections in 1918 – because it popularised sentiments that otherwise might have remained occluded in literature, and possessed a twofold associations with the ancient Gaelic traditions that poets sought to rediscover, because ancient Gaelic poetry was deemed authentic and, by extension, a guarantee of authentic feeling. They cast their roots in the Gaelic culture of the late seventeenth century, when the onslaught of the English had reduced it almost to a relic. The poets of the time, writing in Gaelic, thus sought to fuel the remaining memory of national and local issues and lore through their songs and vision-poems among the population. They were quite successful in their endeavours, as their works had prettily wide circulation and were immensely enjoyed by the Irish peasantry.

The potential impact of ballads on Irish imagination was later rediscovered by Thomas Davis, the leader of the Young Ireland movement in the mid-nineteenth century, who reshaped Gaelic ballads into a political weapon to buttress a specific nationalist agenda. In his hands, any significant event from Wolfe Tone's abortive insurrection was chronicled

[172] Scott was an exception in the panorama of British literature: "Sir Walter Scott was a conspicuous example of a great writer, whose liking of the Irish people was expressed in no cautious manner. In one of his letters during his visit to Ireland in 1825, Sir Walter Scott briefly sums up his impressions as follows: -'I never saw a finer country, nor, to speak my mind, a finer people.'" In *Our Boys*, July 1917, p. 293.
[173] David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland*, cit., p. 34.
[174] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, cit., p. 25.

and celebrated in verses, to be sung all over Ireland.[175] The ballads published in *The Nation* had a rhythm often based upon old Gaelic airs, and their iconography – harps. Towers, wolfhound, the old hag – derived from traditional motifs of Gaelic poetry, the kind translated by Sir Samuel Ferguson in the nineteenth century.[176] The popular balladry of *The Nation* was also imbued with the sense of the past, and it was a means of dealing with history. Thus, the writings of Mangan and Davis – either prose or poetry – laid the groundwork on which later nationalists would build.

This kind of versification was then again retrieved by the nationalists of the early twentieth century, who unleashed a flow of ballads about the Fenians of 1867, prophecies about freedom from British rule and even sporting themes. The contributors to the papers here analysed took it upon themselves to write ballads with contemporary subjects after the model of Davis's poetry, but they never achieved for their poetry the celebrity that Davis attained. The final result was the creation of facile propagandistic verses, the tone of which was overtly political. Along with Ireland's history of rebellion – a popular theme – heroic mythology was another key source for nationalist authors, who drew inspiration from all the three main saga-cycles of ancient Irish mythology.

The language and structures of popular literature, including ballads and tales, made Irish politics and nationalist objects more accessible to the young readers. And delight and thrills were not neglected. Whoever writer wrote in instalments, he or she spent more care upon the construction of plot, which came to be rather elaborate. Yet, even within the limits of a one-page (or two-page) short tale, the writers managed to incorporate political ideas in their fiction. Often, the ideological kernel of the fictional pieces was enshrouded in a guise of historical verisimilitude. All look into Irish history. They sought events that could be considered archetypal or watershed in Irish history and thus adopted as material for the plots. There was a fictional elaboration of the past, especially of the glorious events in the history of Ireland, which aimed to highlight the contribution of eminent men and women to the nation's progress. From many opinion articles, we gather that they saw their Irish historical romances as spurs to the reading of scholarly books of history. On the other, they placed Ireland's misfortunes in a clear historical perspective. Unfortunately, many times, the construction of the plot was so tendentious that the characters were but puppets of it. It seems that most contributors championed the importance of a tight plot over characterization in fiction.

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[175] Cf. David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923*, Trinity History Workshop, Dublin, 1990, p. 61.
[176] Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals. Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980*, cit., p. 14.

Competition was hard and the editors, expert and inexpert alike, strove to attract readers with prize competitions – being essay composition on nationalist themes a favourite of the papers –, quizzes, double Christmas issues, and a 'letters to the editor' section. Nationalist story papers relied heavily on text, each number containing both fictional and not-fictional reading material. Serials with entangled plots were accompanied by opinion articles, editorials, correspondence and quizzes. There were fluid boundaries between fact and fiction: fiction is validated through warranty of its 'factuality', its being based on historical sources. Throughout the same number, non-fictional writings are often strikingly similar in structure, language and topics, to the fictional pieces.

Figure 1 – Example of advertisement appealing to national sentiment (it reads: "You Score for Ireland a Nation every time you buy from Whelan & Son"; "save money for yourself and Ireland"), published in *Our Boys*. Of interest is also the fact that the firm Whelan & Son sold sports goods, such as Gaelic games uniforms and the *camán* (the hurling bat), which is here presented as an object used to define themselves as Irish.

In a typical issue there might be also some illustrations, with the addition of those included in advertisements that served to draw the young readers' interest. Sometimes a full-page illustration, leaving room for only the title heading and a couple of paragraphs, was featured on the front page, as it was meant to catch the attention of potential buyers surveying newsagents' shop windows. Besides being revealing documents about contemporary commodity culture, advertisements also cast a light on the main content and embedded ideology of these Irish publication. Advertisers used to define themselves and their own products in terms of 'Irishness', which they displayed through the accurate choice of slogans resonating with explicit nationalistic rhetoric, visual images of harps – the whole gamut of paraphernalia of Gaelic iconography:

harps, wolfhounds, towers and the likes[177] – and "Gaelic-looking", old-fashioned font and typography. Entrepreneurs and shop owners did not refrain from appealing to national sentiment in their advertising and from brandishing the concept of Irishness to commercial effect. What is difficult to ascertain is whether the emphasis on Irishness originated in the entrepreneurs' earnest commitment to Ireland's political or legislative independence, given that money alone was incentive enough for some of them;[178] nonetheless, their self-representation fitted in well with the campaigns for economic renewal endorsed by the boys' story papers and their autarchic protectionist drives that would lead, after independence, to protective tariffs.

Scorn towards those selling and buying foreign goods is a common feature, usually accompanied by the extolment of the products made in Ireland (or even better in "Ould Erin"). Advertisers appealed to the nationalist sympathies of the consumers, waging a sort of crusade against foreign products – especially those from Britain – that found verbal expression in a series of patriotic calls: Buying Irish was conceived and represented as one of the ways to 'de-Anglicise' the country and resist the pervasiveness of British imported goods. Basically, home-production of periodicals and wares were facets of the same anti-British, de-Anglicising scheme. the campaign for buying Irish products, reading Irish literature – either popular or highbrow – and the revival of Gaelic games can be all interpreted as part of a multifaceted campaign against imported forms of expression and production in favour of what was perceived as the authentic heritage of Ireland.

To conclude, it should be noted that the emergence of the four periodicals here analysed did not completely resolve the problem of suitable reading material for Irish boys. In 1935 the Reverend Stephen J. Brown, a discerning critic of the politics of children's culture and literature in his bibliographic reviews of Irish fiction, compiled *Catholic Juvenile Literature: A Classified List*, in which the Jesuit priest expressed concerns about the dearth of suitably 'Irish' juvenile fiction and the general neglect by parents to provide their children with the few examples of wholesome Irish literature that were then available. Brown prefaces the list with an introductory essay setting out his ideals for Irish fiction and

[177] See Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, cit., p. 101.

[178] As Lauren Clark noted, "Irish advertising campaigns in this period were to nurture the literate Irish child as a buyer and supporter of the autonomous national economy. Whilst statistics do not exist to prove this empirically, children's buying power was understandably of a great significance." Lauren Clark, "Gendering the Victorian Irish Child Reader as Buyer," in *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2014, p. 12. For a detailed study of the cultural meanings of advertising in the Irish Revival period, see: John Strachan and Claire Nally, *Advertising, Literature and Print Culture in Ireland 1891-1922*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012.

expresses regret that so much of the literature available to 'young Ireland' was wanting in terms of being suitably "Catholic, Irish, and, in the broad sense, cultural".[179]

Similarly, in an article entitled "What Shall the Children Read" in *The Irish Monthly* in 1935 Aodh de Blacam expressed grave concern at the extent to which the Irish juvenile imagination was still essentially colonised by the "alien" medium of English cultural images and forms and he sought to inform his readers that they ought to take on a cultural "crusade" to save the youth from the lingering seductions of English culture and juvenile literature. He called his readers to attend to the nationalising of youth and suggested that the fact of political independence meant little if the new generations of free Irish men were allowed to grow up as 'West Britons' with little knowledge or consideration of their Gaelic heritage and cultural traditions. He believed that the "foundations of culture are laid in youthful reading' and that as Irish boys" literature was thus a matter of national concern that particular efforts ought to be made to introduce them to historical literature and tales of national heroes: "a race that forgets its history, or lacks that respect for its own noblest traditions, which must be taught in youth if taught at all effectively, will not be good for God or man". He wished the young (male) Irish mind to become familiar with the historical lays and sagas so that it would "grow up, as it were, with Fionn and Colmcille as companions" and felt that he would only believe that the country had recovered the imagination of young Ireland when he saw "boys organising their little play-ground bands as battalions of the Fianna", instead of forming "rimson dagger Leagues".[180]

II.c *Our Boys*: a Compound of Catholicism and Irishness

The following examination of the papers composing the corpus cannot but begin with a focus on the genesis and development of *Our Boys*, a paper that has attracted considerable scholarly interest in recent years. Michael Flanagan has devoted to the subject numerous studies, starting with an analysis of the construction of masculinity in *Our Boys*, which was the focus of his own Ph.D. dissertation in 2006. This study was further enriched by a couple of articles of his own illustrating, on the one hand, to what extent *Our Boys* can be instrumental to shed a light on the Irish Christian Brothers' endorsement to several forms of

[179] See Stephen J. Brown, *Catholic Juvenile Literature: A Classified List*, London, Burns Oates & Co., 1935.
[180] Aodh de Blacam, "What Shall the Children Read?", in *The Irish Monthly*, vol. 63, no. 748 (Oct., 1935), pp. 680-688.

nationalist assertion in the early decades of the twentieth century – a support nonetheless counterbalanced by the firm assertion of distinct Catholic social and cultural mores; on the other hand, Flanagan has convincingly traced the evolution in the editorial policy of the paper, from the support for Redmond's battle for Home Rule to that for separatist nationalism, connecting this evolution to the shifts in the political stance of the Christian Brothers.[181] Recently, the historian Dáire Keogh contributed to the current scholarship on *Our Boys* with an article on the ideal of boyhood upheld by the Christian Brothers, demonstrating that *Our Boys* can still be both a rich source for intellectual inquiry and a privileged vantage point on Irish culture and history.[182]

Admittedly, part of the interest in this periodical derives from the historical importance of the Christian Brothers – the editors and publishers of the *Our Boys* – in Ireland. Founded in 1803 by Edmund Rice, the Christian Brothers constituted a lay order of religious men, whose main mission was to educate and serve the poorest classes. Their schools have been held in high esteem since the mid-nineteenth century because of their examination-driven teaching, which prepared the students for the Intermediate Examinations[183] and for the admission tests to access a career in the Civil Service or other administrative roles in banks and insurance companies.

History was paramount in their educational mission and they devoted much energy to its teaching, which took a peculiar form. As Flanagan sums up in a 2002 article, the Christian Brothers had implemented a history syllabus and didactic method that were characterised by an "ethos of deep Catholicism" and put emphasis on "the predestined nature of the Irish race, a nation in which Gaelic culture and the Catholic religion had become inextricably bound".[184] The Christian Brothers wrote and published their own textbooks,

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[181] I here refer to: Michael Flanagan, *True Sons of Erin: Catholic/Nationalist Ideology and the Politics of Adventure in Our Boys 1914-32*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Dublin Institute of Technology, 2006; Id., "There is an Isle in the Western Ocean – The Christian Brothers, *Our Boys* and the Representation of Catholic/Nationalist Ideology in Irish Popular Culture", in Celia Keenan and Mary Shine Thompson (eds.), *Treasure Islands in Children's Literature*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2006; Id., "For the Triumph of the Patriot Arms – The Christian Brothers, *Our Boys* and Militant Nationalism in Irish Popular Culture, 1914–1922", in Karen Vandevelde (ed.), *New Voices in Irish Criticism 3*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2002, pp. 44-50. (Also published in James Doan (ed.), *Working Papers in Irish Studies*, Nova Southeastern University, 2001).

[182] Keogh, Dáire. "*Our Boys*: The Christian Brothers and the Formation of Youth in the 'New' Ireland 1914 - 1944." *History of Education*, vol. 44, no. 6, 2015, pp. 700-716. Keogh is also the author of a monographic study centred on the Christian Brothers, *Edmund Rice and the First Christian Brothers,* Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2008.

[183] This practical, no-nonsensical approach to schooling, markedly examination-driven, emerges in the pages of *Our Boys* as well. Some numbers featured advertisements of grind schools, while a column was always devoted to the preparation to the exam. And essays and questions were provided to students for practice.

[184] Michael Flanagan, "For the Triumph of the Patriot Arms – The Christian Brothers, *Our Boys* and Militant Nationalism in Irish Popular Culture, 1914–1922", cit., p. 46. In a 2006 article, Flanagan quoted the following passage from the Christian Brothers' *Historical Class-Book* (1859) as to demonstrate the distinctively Catholic

which – as it is possible to gather from Barry Coldrey's analysis of them – stressed the cultural separateness of Ireland and were instrumental to an articulate programme of Catholic indoctrination, coloured by nationalist feelings: the imperial rule was criticised mainly for the unequal treatment reserved to Catholics.[185] Thus, the emphasis was on episodes of "appalling ordeals" endured by the colonised native Irish such as the Cromwellian persecution and the subjugation to the Penal Laws. Emblematic of this approach to Irish history is a passage from Catechism of Irish History, cast in the form of an oral exam:

> Q.: What is said of Elizabeth's treatment of the Irish people?
> A.: Cobbet says of her reign that it was one unbroken series of robberies and butcheries in Ireland.[186]

Certainly, the Christian Brothers' educational efforts suggest that Irish children's education was a critical site of cultural and political contestation throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as different actors competed for the control of the allegiance of Ireland's youth, valued in the generational sense of their being the future citizens of the state. Garnering the youngsters' allegiance was deemed so important by the Christian Brothers that, in the 1910s, they decided to add a weapon to their educational armoury: they entered the market of magazines intended for juveniles with a home-grown paper. The magazine, titled *Our Boys*, was to appear for the first time in September 1914.

The germinal ideal that would lead to the publication of *Our Boys* can be detected in an article written by Brother P.J. Hennessy published in *The Christian Brothers' Educational Record* of 1914. It focused on the proposal for a new magazine for the entertainment and education of Ireland's young readers – then tentatively titled *The Young Catholic* – and one of its passages is illuminating about the fact that the proposed magazine was conceived as a response to the corrupting influence of imported periodicals:

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nature of Irish nationalism they upheld: "The impartial reader cannot fail to trace in the brief sketch of Ireland, which bring this book to a close, that since the days of the apostolic and sainted Patrick, an undying attachment to the Faith and its divine teachings has always formed the most distinguished feature as well as the most pleasing aspect of the national character". Michael Flanagan, "There is an Isle in the Western Ocean", cit., p. 46.

[185] B.M. Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland: The Christian Brothers and the Development of Irish Nationalism, 1838-1921*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1988, p. 57.

[186] Brother J.M. O'Brien, Catechism of Irish History, in Barry Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland*, cit., p. 121. Needless to say, objections were raised to the Christian Brothers' teaching of history as possible source of irredentism. Pointing his fingers at their Irish history reader and Stephen Gwynn's *Stories from Irish History*, Reverend Michael Curran wondered "Why do our Protestant Commissioners allow these books? Would it not be possible to eliminate Irish history books from the curriculum?". See Joost Augusteijn, "Why did they Fight for Ireland? The Motivation of Volunteers in the Revolution", In *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923*, pp. 114.

> I shall not indulge in platitudes on the power of the Press or of the value of clean and interesting reading for the young, because I believe that my readers are convinced as I am that there are few more powerful agencies for good or ill than the Press, and few more real wants than bright Catholic reading for Catholic boys.[187]

The adjective "clean" – used by Brother Hennessy in his article – was the keyword around which all the Christian Brothers' discourses and initiatives revolved. Determined to get rid of 'unclean' literature, for instance, the Brothers would later promote, in the pages of *Our Boys*, the initiatives of The Apostleship of Clean Literature, a juvenile organisation the mission of which was to stand against the "evil literature" produced by Ireland's "sworn enemies". The adjective clean is deeply reflective of the conservative clerics' concern with the success in Ireland of British papers, identified as sources of potential corruption. Given that, it comes as no surprise that the issues of *Our Boys* were often punctuated with slogans designed to mobilise their young readers to "never spend a penny on the demoralizing stuff brought to Ireland in the shape of stories and boys' papers…".[188] And, parallel to the success of the demoralizing British boys' papers in the Irish leisure reading market, the Christian Brothers thus aimed to concoct a periodical that stirred the youthful nationalism of its readers but in a sanctioned – "clean" – form: nationalist content would be framed within the teachings of a conservative Catholic education.

From its inception, *Our Boys* portrayed itself as a main weapon in the armoury of Catholic nationalists, reporting favourable acknowledgements from the highest ranks in the clergy; indeed, in the very first number, *Our Boys* solemnly declared to have been born under the aegis of Pope Pius X:[189]

> We publish to-day the first number of "Our Boys". The aim of our Journal is to interest, instruct and inspire the boys of our Catholic Schools, to create in them a taste for clean literature, to continue character-forming lessons of their school days, to fire their enthusiasm for what is noble and good to inflate their love of country, and to help in preserving them as devoted children of Our Holy Mother the CHURCH. "OUR Boys" embarks on its Christian mission with the blessing of His Holiness, Pius X.[190]

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[187] Quoted in B.M. Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland*, cit., p. 63.
[188] *Our Boys*, October 1914, pp. 42-43.
[189] *Our Boys*, September 1914, p. 1. Since Pius X died during the printing of the first issue, the editors believed it wise to request and publish a new message of blessing from the highest authority of the Roman Catholic Church, this time from Pope Benedict XV, five numbers later. The editors "request our boys, and our girls too, to make known this periodical among their acquaintances. It has been approved and blessed by Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XV." The new Pope was said to have written the following message: "Well, my children you shall make this known to all my people".
[190] *Our Boys*, September 1914, p. 1.

Through *Our Boys*, the *corps d'armée* of the revival[191] expressed their desire to see the process for Ireland's national self-determination developing along Catholic and truly Irish lines.[192] This implied also a cultural protectionism, in which the Christian Brothers revelled. In their view, Catholicism and Irishness had to permeate all the facets of the Irish youths' lives. As Lyons pointed out, the concern of the Catholic Church, and by extension that of the Christian Brothers, was not simply with doctrine and law, but also with social behaviour, deeply affected by foreign – more specifically English – influences.[193]. The Anglicising force of British Empire had paved the way for a subtle and insidious source of corruption threatening the moral probity of Ireland's youth: that of modernity. As Luke Gibbons stated, "Though it met with the high modern design standards set by its respectable British counterparts such as *British Bulldog*, *Boys of England*, *Boys of Empire* and *Pluck*, it set its face firmly against the popular culture of which it was a part"[194] and which manifested itself in the lures of cinemas, music halls and, of course, unsuitable literature. Metropolitan culture and British influence were not unrelated: many of the modernity threats were consequences of the British presence in Ireland as the alien culture brought metropolitan values and mores.

Therefore, *Our Boys* promoted a vision of the world for nationalist youth in direct opposition to that of metropolitan culture, which was perceived as "unIrish": in the eyes of the Christian Brothers and other conservative clerics, the city was a place of temptation and moral danger. The sensuousness of the new media forms proliferating throughout the country – such as the cinema: Ireland had more seats at cinemas than any other European country – were categorically condemned. The authentic Ireland, the heart of the country, was to be found far from the metropolis, in the isolated lands of the Celtic Fringe. During the Revival, as Seamus Deane among others has argued, "the west became the place of Irish authenticity […] which preserved among its population the national character in its pristine form or, at least, in such a state of preservation that the pristine form could be inferred from".[195]

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[191] Oliver MacDonagh so defines the Christian Brothers in *States of Mind*: *a Study of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780-1980*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1983, p. 114.

[192] The legislation on film censorship was promulgated in 1923 and the Censorship of Publication Act in 1929, both under W.T Cosgrave. Whereas the former fell upon films dangerous to public morality, the latter prohibited the sale and circulation of works considered indecent or obscene, including scientific literature about birth control practises.

[193] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 154.

[194] Luke Gibbons, "Modalities of the Visible" in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture*, pp. 19-25: 20.

[195] Deane, Seamus. *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 52.

Ernest Gellner has observed that since nationalism usually "conquers in the name of a putative folk culture", "its symbolism is drawn from the healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the peasants".[196] Exemplifying Gellner's insights, the contributors to *Our Boys* used regional themes to appeal to their young audience, constructing – at the same time – a romanticised regional identity related to the Celtic Fringes of the British Isles. In line with their nostalgia for an authentic Ireland, the contributors to *Our Boys* extolled the West of the island in serials like "Kitty the Hare's Stories", which provided an identity as Other to English industrial urbanism.[197] In the paper's fictional representations, the West was a heterotopia surviving in opposition to the urbanisation of Britain and the imperial cities, the "bearer of the authentic, quintessential Irish identity, encoded in a landscape different to the industrialised, modernised landscapes of contemporary Britain".[198] Admittedly, by idealising the West – a region in fact marked by mass emigration – *Our Boys* voiced sentiments analogous to those of many nationalists, which were then constructing the myth of the West. In the twentieth century the West came to represent the essence of Irish nationhood in the eyes of nationalists like de Valera, who used to extoll the rural Irish-speaking West, and Patrick Pearse, owner of a cottage in Connemara where he learned Irish.[199]

In their crusade against urban and British culture the Christian Brothers were not alone. The problem was acutely felt among Catholic institutions, and discussed in papers that received their patronage or advertising. As an indication of the atmosphere of general dissatisfaction with the existing situation reference may be made to the role played in fomenting it by *The Leader*.[200] From its inception, *The Leader* called for the control over imported press and literature on nationalistic as well as moral ground,[201] while exposing English popular newspapers and the success of music-hall comedies as both symptoms and agents of denationalisation. Its editor, the pugnacious D.P. Moran, supported the pro-

[196] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p. 57.
[197] Initiated by Victor O'D Power, these stories had been a constant feature of *Our Boys* for over sixty years. They were tales recounted by the travelling woman Kitty the Hare, which romanticised the South-West and rural Ireland.
[198] Kevin Whelan, "The Bases of Regionalism." In P. Ó Drisceoil (ed.), *Culture in Ireland: Regions, Identity and Power*, Institute of Irish Studies, Belfast, 1993. Joep Leersen, retrieving Bakhtin's notion of 'chronotope', likewise wrote of "the Celtic chronotope" with regard to popular representations of Ireland's western peripheries, because these regions were often depicted as "*outside* history", as regions "a liminal setting, a transitional zone between the historical reality of the mainland and the eternal dreamscape of the Ocean". See Joep Leersen, "The Western Mirage: on the Celtic Chronotype in the European Imagination," in T. Collins (ed.), *Decoding the Landscape*, Centre for Landscape Studies, Galway, 1994, pp. 4 and 9.
[199] Patrick J. Duffy, "Writing Ireland. Literature and art in the representation of Irish place." In Brian Graham (ed.), *In Search Of Ireland. A Cultural Geography*, Routledge, London, 1997, p. 68.
[200] Founded in 1900 and enjoying a remarkable success in the early years of the century, the *Leader* ceased publication in 1971. Yet it had never fully recovered from the destruction of its offices in Abbey Street during the Easter Rising and a temporary suppression two years later.
[201] Michael Adams, *Censorship: The Irish Experience*, University of Alabama Press, Ala, 1968, p. 18.

censorship Vigilance Association, committed to picket theatres and destroy bundles of 'dirty' newspapers. Coherently, the paper – an influential opinion-forming organ – was also used as a public platform from which complaining about the low state of Ireland's morale, signalled by people's willingness to tolerate imported abominations. In fact, the Irish people were so brainwashed into perceiving anything English as superior that "if a troop of devils tripped over here from London no-one would dare to protest, and we would probably be urged to admire the dignified and truly English manner in which they wagged their tails".[202]

Even before the establishment of the Irish Free State,[203] various groups or individual were vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction with the type of periodicals, literature and newspapers enjoying a wide readership in Ireland. The Catholic Church often impinged on popular reading habits, deeply hostile to the penetration of the country by British and metropolitan mores and values. Particularly outspoken among these organisations was the Irish Vigilance Association founded in 1911 by members of the Dominican Order with the explicitly stated aim to combat the popularity of noxious publications.[204] The Association launched campaigns and an "enrolment crusade" that garnered the support of the Christian Brothers and *Our Boys*. Irish Vigilance Association received the assistance of *Our Boys* for a long time insofar as, through fictional and non-fictional writings, the young readers of the latter were often reminded of "a practical way" in which they could help the Association, i.e. volunteering to raise funds by selling flowers, "so that this Association may be enabled to carry on its campaign against objectionable newspapers, books and periodicals, and also against the exhibition of indecent items in the theatres and music halls in the city".[205]

To have a complete overview of *Our Boys*, finally, it should be borne in mind that this periodical combined the rejection of urban culture and modernity with the idealisation of Ireland's past and cultural heritage. The fictional writing in *Our Boys* often dealt with historical subjects, in a peculiar fashion that deserves attention and some further remarks. The contributors of historical fictional narratives wrote in the wake of A.M. Sullivan, whose

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[202] The details regarding the *Leader* and D.P. Moran are gathered from Patrick Maume's Introduction to D.P. Moran, *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland; edited by Patrick Maume*, University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2006, pp. vii-xxxi.

[203] *Our Boys*' campaigns mirrors and anticipated the time when censorship of publications was inserted, in 1924 Ireland, in a legal and political structure. Intriguingly, also the devout Catholics among the Sinn Féiners – the opponents of the Irish Parliamentary Party endorsed by the Christian Brothers – stood against the dangers of metropolitan culture like musical halls and improper literature, often deeming it a British attack on the moral purity of Irish people. Immoral entertainment was thus one of the polemical target that separatists and conservative clerics shared: the future alliance between the two was to be built on this common moral ground and facilitated the establishment of censorship.

[204] Michael Adams, *Censorship: The Irish Experience*, cit., p. 15.

[205] *Our Boys*, 10th November 1927, p. 13. In the late 1920s, *Our Boys* became a weekly by virtue of its great success.

1867 bestseller *The Story of Ireland* was still advertised in the pages of their periodical almost fifty years after the first edition. In *The Story of Ireland*, Sullivan presented a narrative based on "chief events", in a way that they would be "easily comprehended and remembered" by his young readers – the first implied readership is indeed that of "the Irish Nation of the Future", which would appreciate an exhaustive account of the country's history told "after the manner of simple storytellers".[206] Drawing on Ireland's oral tradition, Sullivan thus worked Ireland's past into a narrative with heroes and villains as they might be found in fairy tales, and of "stirring events, abounding with episodes thrilling, glorious and beautiful";[207] the focus is often on events of national struggles – told taking recourse to an abundance of rhetorical figures and imaginative language – such as the Irish rising against the oppressor in 1641, when the Ulster plantation vanished away "like the baseless fabric of a vision".[208] Through a celebration of "the glorious biographies of our patriots and our saints", the book not only catered for entertainment and instruction, but also pointed to the duties of Ireland's boys, who "will be the men on whom Ireland must depend" as "they will make her future".[209]

Sullivan's was a highly influential text, running through dozens of editions, and served as a blueprint for the canon of Irish history as taught for generations by the Christian Brothers.[210] As a consequence, also the fictional writings of the paper they edited resonated with Sullivan's ideas and words. Ideas about a balanced combination of entertainment and teachings to instruct and delight, as well as the notion of boys' responsibilities towards their country, recur, for instance, in the following passage, in which the editors explain that the literary historical pieces published in *Our Boys*

> not only teach the principal facts of the Story of Ireland in an easy and agreeable manner but they will put the spirit of true Irish boys into your hearts. They will serve to build up your character. These poems will make you love that country which your ancestors loved so well – the island of saints and scholars and patriots – that country for whose sake, in the years long dead, brave men trod the scaffold or fell with their faces towards the foe……. You must ever keep in mind as a sacred and cherished thought, that you are the children of saints and martyrs, that you have grand and holy traditions by following

[206] Alexander M. Sullivan, *The Story of Ireland: Or a Narrative of Irish History. Written for the Youth of Ireland*, A.M. Sullivan, Dublin, 1867, p. 7.
[207] *Ibidem*. For an analysis of Sullivan's *The Story of Ireland* in the light of Vladimir Propp's studies on fairy tales see: Roy F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland*, Allen Lane / Penguin, London, 2001, pp. 3-8.
[208] Alexander M. Sullivan, *The Story of Ireland: Or a Narrative of Irish History. Written for the Youth of Ireland*, cit. p. 356.
[209] *Ibidem*, cit, p. 8.
[210] Roy F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland*, cit., p. 9.

> in the footsteps of your fathers so faithfully that your names may be handed down to posterity, as the worthy sons of noble sires.[211]

The passage is noteworthy, first, because it constitutes evidence of the investment on boys. The proof is encapsulated in the explicit statement that it was the young, mentored by the Christian Brothers through schooling and clean readings, who held the destiny of Ireland in their hands. The editors wanted to convey the message that many "brave men" had "trod the scaffold" after trying to deliver the country from colonial rule so, in the future, it would be incumbent on the youngest generations to honour that debt by worthy personal behaviour.[212]

Second, the message that boredom had to be kept at bay is effectively conveyed. Adopting the formula popularized by *The Story of Ireland*, the contributors to *Our Boys* demonstrated their belief that the principal facts and notions had to be imparted in an easy and agreeable manner. Instruction had to be counterbalanced by pleasure, as was the case with the popular *Boys' Own Paper*. And by successfully achieving the right balance between instruction and delight, *Our Boys* came to represent a *unicum* in the Irish paper landscape at the time.

In certain respects, with the distribution of *Our Boys* the Christian Brothers may also be said to have filled a lacuna in the multifarious paper landscape created by the Roman Catholic Church in the same years. Hardly can the influence of the Church on the social and cultural life of Ireland be underestimated, as it manifested itself in a number of ways. One of these was the production and circulation of popular religious reading material, which reached an inordinate proportion throughout the twentieth century. In 1899, indeed, the Catholic Truth Society opened an Irish branch in the country, which would publish a vast amount of books, pamphlets and magazines from its inception until well into the second half of the twentieth century: the reason underlying the project was, not unlike *Our Boys*, to counteract the success of "trashy novels, novelettes and magazines from a penny upwards, with which the country was flooded at the present day".[213] The society would become really

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[211] *Our Boys*, September 1914, pp. 32-33. This is the paper's inaugurating issue.

[212] Denis Donoghue recalls that at his Christian Brothers school in the 1930s-40s, the students "were encouraged to regard the history of Ireland as unfinished business, a great story that lacked only a noble resolution. It was our [the students'] duty to maintain a sense of Ireland, to learn the language and speak it, take part in national and never in foreign games, practise the old customs of Ireland, and above all keep alive the great consanguinity between Ireland and the Catholic Church." Denis Donoghue, *Warrenpoint*, pp. 156-157 reported in Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire. Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 82.

[213] *The Catholic Truth Annual and Record of Conference*, Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, Dublin, 1905, p. 31. According to Michael Adams, the Society's principal objects were I) to disseminate among Catholics good cheap literature; 2) to assist uneducated or badly instructed Catholics to a better knowledge of their religion;

successful only in Independent Ireland. As detailed in annual reports of the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, the circulation figures rocketed in the 1950s, when almost 3,000,000 copies of the society's publications were distributed thanks to the capillary network formed by diocesan parish churches and those provided by monastic congregations in the town and cities, and by denominational schools.[214] But selling figures were lower in the 1910s, hovering around some thousands, and a survey of the range of topics of these publications is indicative of the lack of a story paper, modelled after the British *Boys' Own Paper*, that catered for the entertainment and instruction of Ireland's youth. Before the publication of *Our Boys*, Irish youths had to content themselves with hagiographical accounts of saints' lives or of famous pilgrimages.

The real alternative to the British story papers was *Our Boys*. Its editors did not lack business nous, as they published reading material that would entice their 'boys' into more strident ideological works. The fathers of *Our Boys* wished for their notions a readership that would represent – at least – as broad a portion of the audience as that upon which the Gaelic Revival based itself, so they were careful to eliminate any potential bar to its wide circulation: for instance, they set a price that made the purchase affordable for the lower classes – 1 penny. A further limitation to the mass of potential readers could have been a kind of content not palatable to young readers, a limitation overcome by the contributors' effort to present the substance of their ideas in an amusing form. As a result, the stories there published are fascinating from several points of consideration. They featured literary techniques and devices that, by then, had become the conventions of serialised popular literature. Luke Gibbons has observed that *Our Boys* "was unflinching in its Catholic mission, but it still had no option but to address the far from orthodox folk-world of vernacular culture".[215] Although denigrating the demoralizing British story papers, from that tradition they wisely retained the employment of suspense, mystery, tight episodic plotting, the old tricks of passion and fancy, and crime subjects. They also admitted their recourse to page-turning, thrilling stories as the 'package' for their messages, because they were convinced that "boys, as a rule, like to have their reading spiced with story and anecdote, and the more highly spiced the better they like it".[216]

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and 3) to combat the pernicious influence of infidel and immoral publications by circulation of good, cheap and popular Catholic literature. See Michael Adams, *Censorship: The Irish Experience*, cit., p. 19.

[214] Síle de Cléir, *Popular Catholicism in 20th-Century Ireland. Locality, Identity and Culture*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2017, pp. 2-3. See also: Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2001*, Harper Perennial, London, 2004, p. 69.

[215] Luke Gibbons, "Modalities of the Visible" in *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture*, pp. 19-25: 20.

[216] *Our Boys*, September 1914, p. 2.

As far as literary genres are concerned, historical romances, adventure tales and school-stories were paramount in the pages of *Our Boys*. For example, the stories by authors such as Mrs Margaret T. Pender – she authored the serials *The Adventures of the White Arrow*, the serialisation of which spanned two decades, and *The Child-Stealers. A Tale from Cromwell's Days* – captured the favour of the readers, who either revelled in the mystery and romance of past ages or appalled at the misdeeds of the British in Ireland. Great success was garnered also by the serial *The Widow and the Roundheads. A Tale of the Cromwellian Invasion* by Connor J. Fanning.

Certainly, by writing on Cromwell, the writers contributing to *Our Boys* conveniently tapped into an inexhaustible reservoir of maledictions around the figure of Irish history's arch-villain. But, at the same time, these authors reversed pre-established assumptions about the Early Modern Age. In fact, the Early Modern Age was a popular setting for the stories featured in British papers as well. However, if, in the latter case, this historic period stood out as a time of equality, justice and prosperity,[217] in the pages of *Our Boys*, the Early Modern Age was described in the very opposite fashion. For instance, Mr O'Mullane wrote the successful *'Neath the Banners of Spain and Ireland*, a bloodthirsty serial with unrelenting violence and multiple violent deaths poured onto the characters, which deals with maritime battles between the Irish and the English in the late sixteenth century. Interestingly, in this serial, the main allies of the Irish are the Catholic Spaniards, the arch-rivals of the English, who were often depicted in the role of villains in the British story papers,[218] whereas the true villains are the English. In '*Neath the Banners of Spain and Ireland*, the bellicose Elizabethan mariners celebrated in works like Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855)[219] are contemptuously portrayed as brutal and savage people exuding cruelty. The English are led by Smith who is always depicted while torturing his prisoners, throwing them to the fangs of a devil-fish and slaughtering the protagonist's Irish family.[220]

In their historical adventure tale like '*Neath the Banners of Spain and Ireland*, the contributors to *Our Boys* strove to emphasise the bravery and endurance of heroic Irish boys,

[217] Popular ballads and stories, indeed, often portrayed Tudor England as an ideal and lost world, where honest simplicity prevailed. See Alun Howkins and C. Ian Dyck. "'The Time's Alteration': Popular Ballads, Rural Radicalism and William Cobbett", *History Workshop*, no. 23, 1987, pp. 25-26.
[218] Cf. Louis James, "Tom Brown's Imperialist Sons", cit., pp. 91 and 97. John Springhall, "'Disseminating Impure Literature': The Penny Dreadful Publishing Business Since 1860," *The Economic History Review*, vol. 47, no. 3, 1994, p. 574; Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain*, cit., pp. 54-57.
[219] *Our Boys* was highly critical of Charles Kingsley's works. In the 1916 February issue readers were indeed reminded to "avoid anti-Irish, anti-Catholic books like the over-praised boys' stories of Kingsley". See *Our Boys*, February 1916, p. 168.
[220] See *Our Boys*, June 1915, pp. 263-264.

even against a more powerful, better-equipped and even violent enemy. This is a pattern recurring also in the numerous stories detailing episodes of foreign oppression and religious persecution, usually accompanied by illustrations drawing upon the artistic genre of martyrology which provided a visual correlative to the tales. Given the distinctive Catholic quality of the Christian Brothers' nationalism, it comes as no surprise that the adversities faced by the tales' protagonists often related to conflicts of religious nature; anti-Catholic persecution is, for instance, at the centre of "A Midnight Mass", published in the 1915 January issue.

Much more unpredictable is the fact that the commercially minded Christian Brothers did not refrain from publishing also western stories, to which, however, they bestowed a distinctive Irish nationalist flavour. It was the era when the American author Zane Grey dominated sales far beyond the United States, acquiring the status of a worldwide phenomenon. His fanciful depictions of the American frontier, as with *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), were the perfect fodder for large sections of Irish readership at the time.[221] While established critics, such as Burton Rascoe and Heywood Broun, castigated this kind of books and tales as lowbrow, the Christian Brothers realised that they were what many Irish boys wanted to read. However, they toned down the graphic violence of the foreign originals, and made sure that villains get their retribution. Hardly were cowboys' stories deleterious for the Irish youngsters' minds, especially if refashioned to buttress a nationalist-Catholic agenda, so *Our Boys* featured serials like *A Trapper's Adventure in the Rocky Mountains* about the Irish-born cowboy Francis 'Pancho' O'Hegarty, the son of an exiled man who "had been one of those who sided with Ireland" and because of his Fenian past "had to cross the ocean to a strange country"; yet he would never forget his homeland and Pancho grew up with "his father telling wonderful stories of that far-away land, the wrongs that were done to it, and the men who had fought to defend it". As an obvious consequence, Pancho would announce his intention of going to "fight for Ireland when he would be a man".[222]

The Christian Brothers enacted all the strategies to whet the desires of their readership and make *Our Boys* a successful paper. *Our Boys* was the most efficient in spurring its readership to continue to buy its numbers, by constantly reproducing elements that had proved successful and linking each number to the text through running series of articles, serialised stories, and through advertising. The periodical was widely advertised and

[221] Cf. Elizabeth Russell, "Holy Crosses, Guns and Roses", p. 15.
[222] *Our Boys*, June 1917, p. 124.

would-be readers were also enticed by the billing of new serials by favourite authors: *Our Boys* published serials "chockfull of thrills that follow one another in rapid succession".[223]

By virtue of the Christian Brothers' editorial sagacity, the periodical born under the aegis of Pope Pius X largely outlived *Fianna*, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's*, becoming the most popular of them: not only did the first issue sell 30,000 copies, but the monthly circulation rose rapidly to 40,000, with an estimated readership of 100,000 throughout the country and the Irish diaspora abroad. My discussion of readership figures ought to give credence to Coldrey's analysis,[224] but also Flanagan and Keogh have positively stated that 40,000 were currently actively buying *Our Boys*, and agreed that many more readers were available as a potential audience for books. After all, the paper's editors made similar calculations, as clear from some messages published in the earlier issues of the monthly.[225] The first issue was an unqualified commercial success, being read both abroad and in the trenches of the First World War, and the later numbers scored a greater success not only with the readers but with many subsequent writers and editors of periodicals.[226]

Nor did the paper fail to portray itself also as a great commercial success, often reporting positive selling figures and stating that their print run was steadily increasing. In November 1915, the editors of *Our Boys* informed their readership that they were moving to new larger headquarters and were going to publish an *Annual* of the periodical containing all the issues from September 1914 to September 1915, including two Double numbers.[227] In August they published the following notice: "We owe a special debt of gratitude to those advertisers who have allowed us to hold over their advertisements till our next number. The pressure on our advertising space is becoming greater month after month." [228] And in January 1918 The Editorial Notes included the notice quoted below:

> Though our printers largely increased the usual supply of copies of "Our Boys" for the Christmas Double Number, still the demand was so great that we were altogether unable to meet it. Orders for more followed in rapid succession, but we had only one answer to make – "Sold Out.[229]

For all this success, however, *Our Boys* failed to maintain the cultural allegiance of its established reading public at a certain point – in the aftermath of the Easter Rising. The 1916

[223] Advertisement about new serial in *Our Boys*, 18th August 1927, p. 850.
[224] Coldrey, Barry M. *Faith and Fatherland*, cit., p. 27.
[225] See *Our Boys*, October 1914.
[226] See *Our Boys*, September 1915.
[227] *Our Boys*, Christmas Number, 1915.
[228] *Our Boys*, August 1916, p. 347.
[229] *Our Boys*, January 1918, p. 123.

Easter Rising, the great "Turning Point"[230] in Irish history, undermine the reputation of *Our Boys* and would later cause major shifts in its editorial policy.[231] The editors of *Our Boys* failed to understand the enormous changes in people's attitude towards the Empire and the prospect of Home Rule brought about by the uprising. The misfortunes of *Our Boys* are a significant comment upon the variability of public interest. Certainly, *Our Boys* provided its young readership with an arena where one could publicly discuss national matters, striving to control "the direction" of the debates and to mould the views of Irish boys and girls. However, it should be considered that the readers' opinion may, in turn, influence the editorial line of a newspaper: since newspapers are business depending on sales and advertising, they ultimately rely on the opinions of their readership, which are variable.[232] Kelly Boyd has likewise observed that, being a periodical part of the market, "the reader was instrumental in guiding the editorial decisions of editor and publisher. [The reader] exercised a powerful hold on the proprietors by his refusal to buy or his eagerness to consume one or another of these offerings".[233] In the case of the juvenile magazine here analysed, the beliefs of their purchasers – the youngsters or their parents – contributed to modifying the editors' attitude towards Irish politics.

In his own 2015 article, Keogh maintained that the Christian Brothers' were tardy in questioning their views on Irish nationalism after the Easter Rising and its aftermath of violence. From its inception, *Our Boys* adopted a determined Redmondite nationalist stance, and only gradually altered its perspective in response to evolving public opinion. Thus, as the political atmosphere grew increasingly tense, resentment grew at the editor's moderate Home Rule stance, his failure to acknowledge the Easter Rising – let alone its significance –

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[230] See Thomas E. Hachey, *Turning Points in Twentieth Century Irish History*, Irish Academic Press, Portland, 2011. At the political level, the Easter Rising had a huge impact on Ireland and its relationship with Britain, for the constitutional changes that accompanied the outbreaks of violence led to the end of the union between Ireland and Great Britain, with the ensuing establishment of the Irish Free State and the self-governing Northern Ireland in 1922.

[231] *Our Boys*'s was not an isolated case as the Rising turned the whole of Irish nationalism towards a radically different position. Although the revolt was initially deplored by the majority of the papers still in print and by most Dubliners, the ensuing prolonged series of execution turned the tide in public opinion: England's brutal over-reaction drove many people to a more radical stance on Irish politics. Indeed, Jonathan Githens-Mazer has defined the Easter Rising and the events that occurred in its aftermath as constituting a cultural trigger point that accounted for the radicalisation of Irish people in the wake of the rebellion. The concept of the cultural trigger point draws on aspects of social movement theory, in that it defines a set of events that coalesce "a self-aware group to react with a sense of agency and urgency to a perceived injustice". See Jonathan Githens-Mazer, *Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising: Cultural and Political Nationalism in Ireland*, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2006.

[232] Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 6.

[233] Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain*, cit., pp. 6-7. See also p. 67

and his continued support of Ireland's military involvement in the Great War.[234] The absence of any reference to the Rising and its protagonists in the pages of *Our Boys* in the months following the dramatic event is indeedstriking, especially if we take into account that many among the leaders of the rebellion had been educated by the Christian Brothers in their youth.

The June issue boasted a merry tone that sharply contrasted with the drama taking place in Ireland at the time: "June – merry June – brings us near the holidays, when our boys will enjoy their annual visit to seaside or country" were the incipit of the opinion article featured in the front page.[235] The first reference to the Rising, moreover, is contained in a full-page notice sent to *Our Boys* by the editors of the renovated *Freeman's Journal* which reopened in December 1916 after the "calamity of April".[236] The *Freeman's Journal* was a Redmondite newspaper and their view on the rebellion was anything but positive.

Our Boys's choice to maintain loyalty to the Irish Party and its battle for Home Rule was not made by other Catholic periodicals: the widely popular *Catholic Bulletin*, for instance, soon abandoned its constitutional position to enter the separatist camp. The cover of the earliest issue after the execution is highly emblematical of the paper's sharp shift in policy: there is nothing as a sign of mourning. And, month after month from July 1916, the *Catholic Bulletin* featured photographic portraits of the sixteen dead men, while lacing the biographical narration of their lives and deeds with separatist rhetoric. The first time that *Our Boys* published photographs and laudatory biographical sketches of the Easter risers was almost four years later. Besides, the Christian Brothers' periodical showed a remarkable apathy towards the possibility of political change when, in May 1918, it still lingered on high praises for John Redmond after the latter's death.[237] This obstinacy in supporting the moderate nationalist party presumably shook the loyalty of many of its readers, unwilling to keep buying the now out-dated paper. And sales plummeted.

In 1920, however, detachment from the prevailing attitudes in Irish politics – marked by increasing radicalisation and polarisation – was no longer a wise strategy, and the Christian Brothers eventually jettisoned any ambiguity or reticence towards the contemporary political situation. Some dramatic changes took place in the political landscape after the 1916 rebellion, which were to exert a considerable impact on all aspects

[234] Dáire Keogh, "*Our Boys*: The Christian Brothers and the Formation of Youth in the 'New Ireland' 1914-1944." *History of Education*, vol. 44, no. 6, p. 704.
[235] *Our Boys*, June 1916, p. 267.
[236] *Our Boys*, Christmas Number, p. 115.
[237] *Our Boys*, May 1918, p. 203.

of Irish life and culture. In 1918 Sinn Féin triumphed at the General Election, while the support for the Constitutional Party faded away; and if the year 1919 witnessed the outbreak of the Anglo-Irish War, 1920 saw the initiation of Black and Tan enlistment in January and the Civil War. The Christian Brothers had to come to terms with a country radically changed, now fraught with political tensions and marked by an increasingly sharp polarisation.

Therefore, the advanced nationalist Brother Canice Craven, a friend of Patrick Pearse and his own teacher of Irish in Westland Row in the 1890s, was appointed editor of the magazine. He was in full control of what was to be published in the pages of *Our Boys* as he was said to "have run the paper single-handed": Craven was its "business manager as well as editor; he canvassed for advertisements as well as for literary contributions, and he wrote sheaves of material, stories, dialogues, letters, exhortations, and denunciations, all in that vigorous, picturesque style that was peculiarly his own. The paper was the mirror of his mind." It was the mind of a staunch nationalist and both the fictional and non-fictional prose in *Our Boys* was going to reflect it.

With Craven taking the reins of *Our Boys*, the magazine began to address contemporary events in its fictional pieces. According to Flanagan, the first fictional piece that denotes Craven's unambiguous nationalism appeared in the 1920 June issue.[238] Entitled "Tragedy and Comedy" it was a story set at the walls of Mountjoy Prison during the course of a hunger strike of Republican political activists, demanding the recognition of their status as political, rather than criminal, prisoners. "Tragedy and Comedy" was noteworthy in the sense that it was the first occasion that contemporary events were addressed in the magazine as the hunger strike described in the story had taken place only the month before.

Illustrative of the shift in the paper's editorial policy was also the increasing use of established nationalist iconography, ranging from the garlanded round towers, wolfhounds and shamrocks of the Young Ireland period to the pikes of the 1798 Rebellion, the centenary of which had recently focused the minds of many young nationalists on the purity and nobility of sacrifice for the nationalist cause. In the same line, the fictional content underwent a "radical re-fashioning" as priest-hunting red-coats (Cromwell's soldiers) were turned into steel-helmeted British troops. The Easter Rising, moreover, became a subject worthy of fictional representation. The 1922 July issue was dedicated to Thomas J. Clarke, the first signatory of the proclamation of the Republic of Ireland, one of "the seven Irish

[238] Michael Flanagan, *True Sons of Erin*, cit., p. 13.

immortals, who led the Rebellion of Easter Week".[239] The very same number also featured a biographical account of the life of Michael Collins, a celebratory piece about Kevin Barry, a fictional story about the Rebellion dealing with the story of a man, worthy of his Fenian father, who surrenders his arms on Easter Monday: all these writings evidenced the Brothers' shift in stance on Irish politics.

This was a strategic, smart move that enabled *Our Boys* to reach its sales' zenith in the 1920s. The long-lived periodical ceased publication in 1990, lasting as long as the particular consensus and cultural discourse it exemplified. These reached an end at the end of the twentieth century when *Our Boys* was unable to make a successful transition to the demands of the new millennium; it no longer met the needs of an ever-changing readership and eventually ceased publication.

[239] *Our Boys*, July 1922, p. 365.

Figure 2 - Cover of the Summer double issue, July 1922, of *Our Boys*. Of particular interest are the depiction of the referee – who is wearing the kilt – and the fact that sport is the main subject of the illustration: boys are depicted running, swimming and in the bottom left corner there are hurling sticks and the necessary equipment to play Gaelic football.

II.d *Fianna*: The Story Paper of the Irish Boy Scouts

Several journals had challenged *Our Boys* in its heyday. One of them was *Fianna*. There are many similarities between *Our Boys* and *Fianna*, but the two periodicals are very fascinating for their differences as well.

Fianna was founded in 1915 by a number of able, and until that time obscure, fervent ex-Boy Scouts with publicistic ambitions. The group included Patsy O'Connor and Percy Reynolds – who died fighting in the ranks of the Irish Brigade on the battlefields of the Great War – and others of lesser reputation. These young men all shared a nationalist stance on Irish politics and the membership in the Irish Boy Scouts. In particular, the paper they founded, *Fianna*, was designed to mirror and popularise the principles of the Irish Boy Scout organisation, called Na Fianna Eireann in Gaelic.

Na Fianna Eireann was established in 1909 and, as explicitly declared in the *Fianna Handbook* of 1914, "its object was stated in its constitution to be the re-establishment of the Independence of Ireland".[240] Every boy joining the Irish Boy Scouts had to make a solemn promise to devote all his energy to carrying the objective into practice – "I promise to work for the independence of Ireland, never to join England's armed forces and to obey my superior officers," was the oath each new member had to take. The *Fianna Handbook* additionally provides us with a clear picture of what being a member of Na Fianna Eireann meant:

> To be a member of the Fianna means that you [the Boy Scout joining the organisation] have devoted yourself to the service in Ireland. It means that you will become trained in mind and body to render the service. It means that the service of Ireland will be your first object in life and that you will strive with all your mind and strength and energy to carry out the promise you made when you became a member. In order to do his a great deal has to be learned. But first it is necessary to say that every member must set before him a very high ideal. The members are pledged to re-establish a free Irish nation, and their first work must be to train themselves to be fit citizens of a free nation. A member must never do anything that would bring discredit upon Ireland or upon the Fianna. He must make himself strong in mind as well as in body. He must learn all about Ireland. He must know her history and learn her language and work to further her interests. He should study and think for himself and be self-reliant and strong. In addition he will receive a military training and he should strive to become so proficient that when Ireland needs soldiers he can take an important place in the fighting line.[241]

[240] *Fianna Handbook*, The Central Council of Na Fianna Eireann, Dublin, 1914, p. 12.
[241] *Fianna Handbook*, cit., pp. 14-15.

It was to publicize these aims and objectives, that O'Connor and Reynolds established the unofficial organ of the Irish Boy Scout movement – i.e. *Fianna*. The paper was inevitably reflective of the principles of both the Boy Scout organisation as well as those of the movement's founder, the Belfast-born Bulmer Hobson (1883-1969).[242]

The latter might have been also a sort of mentor for Na Fianna Eireann members Patsy O'Connor and Percy Reynolds, who, in the December 1914 published *Nodlaeg na Bhfiann* ('The Fianna Christmas'): though not an official publication of Na Fianna Eireann, this short annual of sixteen pages was welcomed by the general headquarters of the organization, including Hobson. Hobson, also a prolific writer and editor of the monthly *Irish Freedom*, knew from personal experience that books and magazine may influence a person's course of life, because it was the reading material suggested by his Belfast neighbours, Alice Milligan and Ethna Carbery, (nom de plume of Anna Johnston) that triggered the boy's conversion to the cause for Erin. Scanning through the pages of his neighbours' newspaper *Shan Van Vocht*, the writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone and Standish O'Grady's books revisiting Irish mythology, Hobson became convinced that his homeland was a culturally different nation from Britain, and should become also a separate political entity. Given that, it comes as no surprise that he endorsed the editorial efforts of O'Connor and Reynolds after the publication of *Nodlaeg na Bhfiann.* More importantly, the endorsement to the Christmas annual further motivated the two ambitious young men to start their own story paper. The first issue of *Fianna*, a monthly, eventually came out in 1915.

The differences between *Fianna* and *Our Boys* are multiple. First of all, the former represented a much more radical viewpoint than *Our Boys*, insofar as it was the mouthpiece of the advanced nationalists from its inception. Second, as clearly stated in the *Handbook*,

[242] Hobson devoted great part of his life to awakening patriotism in Ireland's youth, starting at the age of seventeen with the establishment of the Ulster Debating Club for boys. Other initiatives would follow, among which the establishment of the short-lived progenitor of Na Fianna Eireann in Belfast: thanks to the stamina of Markievicz, this project would resumed in 1909 in the shape of a nationalist response to Boy Scout movement, founded by Robert Baden-Powell the previous year. The notion of "countering" Baden-Powell's movement is not irrelevant. I have found multiple allusions to Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts in the papers here examined, and although they were unconnected, most of them make fun of the British youth organisation and its founder. Beneath the veil of irony, however, one may glimpse the nationalists' fear of expansion in Ireland of Baden-Powell's organisation and influence. For instance, in June 1911, *Irish Freedom* featured an article whose mocking tone hardly conceals the author's preoccupations, as it complains about: "Baden-Powell, [who] in a recent issue of his paper tries to flatter his Irish dupes by recalling an incident in the life of Cuchulainn, and comparing the Boy Corps of Emhain-Maca with the members of his organisations in his country. In stating that the nickname of Setanta was "the Hound of Cuchulainn", Sir Robert demonstrates his ignorance of our language: nor is his knowledge of history less profound, for he confuses Setanta with Culain and Culain with Cuchulainn. […] If the tuition of Lieut.-General Sir RSS Baden-Powell, KCB etc., is always as accurate as the above, we will not be surprised to learn in the future of 'Britain's Last Line of Defence' doing this equal in stupidity to those perpetrated by her army in the recent South African war. The hero (?) of Mafeking might, on a closer study of Cuchulainn, learn to be a little less vainglorious".

"Na Fianna Eireann [was] a National organisation open to all Irish Boys, no matter what class or creed or party they or their fathers belong to";[243] hence the paper's denominational neutrality, which manifested in the avoidance of discussing narrowly sectarian issues. From Wolfe Tone's declaration of August 1796, moreover, Hobson retained an important principle: that of the non-mutual exclusivity of separatism and non-sectarianism,[244] which would inform his subsequent initiatives aimed at Ireland's youth. Unlike *Our Boys*, finally, *Fianna* explicitly declared the intention to keep its focus squarely on Ireland and Ireland's national affairs: its objective was "to train the youth of Ireland to work mentally and physically for the independence of their country".[245] Whenever the editors and contributors ventured into the realm of international affairs, the inward-looking impulse did not lose strength: references to the Great War and to the anti-colonialist movements in the world only apparently dragged *Fianna* out of its journalistic isolation.

If the difference between *Fianna* and *Our Boys* was evident, that between the monthly and the *Fianna Handbook* was slight. For the pages of both abounded with information about the various branches of *Fianna* which proliferated throughout the country; with instructions on signalling, drilling, and the proper use of rifles; with advertisements concerning uniforms, military equipment and the like. Together they also propagated an image of ideal boyhood which relied on a compound of patriotism and morality. The young boy had to be loyal to God and to Ireland, not to the British King or the Empire. Loyalty to the country had to be manifested in everyday life, from the purchase of Irish-made products to the everyday resistance opposed to the "Anglicising force".

Fianna and its editors approached the young Irish public with the highest hopes. They were committed to exert a marked influence upon the youth's morale, to instil national pride in their readers and spur them to fight for national self-determination. In keeping with this goal, historical adventure tales fuelled the readers' conviction of Ireland's right to independence, by focusing on the way Ireland had been treated in the past by the unscrupulous British rule. These fictional writings centred on Irish history of resistance, usually resulting in a praise of the long line of patriots who vainly attempted to throw off the British yoke: Wolfe Tone, the leader of the abortive Rising of 1798 was, for instance, commemorated in a long story set in Bodenstown; Robert Emmett, who instigated the failed insurrection of 1803, is depicted as a saint prophesising Ireland's freedom from the scaffold

[243] *Fianna Handbook*, cit., p. 23.
[244] Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the Nationalist Movement in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2009, p. 13.
[245] *Fianna*, March 1915, p. 3.

of his own execution; and the Fenians, leaders of the unsuccessful revolt of 1867, frequently recurred throughout the pages of *Fianna*: if the 1915 July issue was devoted to the commemoration of O'Donovan Rossa, the whole compound of issues featured a serialised story by Patrick Pearse, *The Wandering Hawk*, which romanticised Fenian plots and whose character nicknamed 'Little Captain' was presumably loosely based on William Francis Lomasney. The brutal treatment reserved to past rebels should have mobilised new resistance and incited the Irish Boy Scouts to prepare themselves for the eventuality of a war against Britain.

Loyalty, moral probity, tenaciousness, patriotism were the defining characteristics of this ideal boy ready to fight for Ireland's cause. An ideal boy, by the way, who did not seem as prudish as *Our Boys* depicted him in a serialised story, running from October 1918 to March 1919, which details the day-off of a group of exemplar boy scouts at a local cinema showing "objectionable pictures". The author of this piece lingered on the reaction of the boys when

> Then came the ballet girl. This was the limit. Her dress need not be described for she had scarcely any. The antics she performed were not only indecent but shocking. We never saw nor heard anything that approached the grotesque vulgarities of that degraded specimen of womankind. We covered our burning faces with both our hand.[246]

Figure 3 – This is an illustration from the story on the Irish Boy Scouts published in *Our Boys* in October 1919. The boys are seen as moral guardians, censoring the "obscene pictures" in defence of Catholic morality. It is an attempt at identifying this youth organisation with the ideology of the Catholic Church. However, the religious element is absent in the pages of *Fianna*, reflecting the non-sectarian nature of the youth militant organisation in the earliest years.

[246] *Our Boys*, October 1919, p. 35.

Perhaps, *Fianna* resembled *Our Boys* under one aspect only: the ability of its editors and contributors to detect successful trends in popular literature. Thus, a wealth of adventure tales, school stories, spy stories populated its pages. Its writers dealt with contemporary issues presented in a catchy, fictional form: *Fianna*'s readers could easily grasp what the contributors meant to impart. For instance, the tale titled *The Spy Peril*[247] mocked British anti-German propaganda and the phenomenon of spy-fever in Irish society, which was connected to the emerging fear of the "enemy within", namely the enemy that does not come from abroad but lurks in the country waiting to strike it. Since the enemy took the form of the spy, some people started to be obsessed with pro-German spies and espionage. The obsession degenerated into the appearance of amateur spy-catchers, ordinary people who took it upon themselves to deal with spies: they accused other ordinary people of being enemy spies and reported them to the authorities.[248] It was such a common phenomenon that *Fianna* decided to fictionalise it. In *The Spy Peril*, a husband and his wife report each other to the police: neither the one nor the other is a spy, but the news on spies in the papers made such an impression on them that they saw pro-German spies everywhere. Both the lexicon and the general topic of the tale, moreover, also constituted a clear reference to *The Riddle of the Sands. A Record of Secret Service*, the novel by Erskine Childers that became an immediate bestseller soon after its publication in 1903. With the aid of detailed maps and topographical surveys, Childers concocted a veritable account of secret German preparations for the invasion of England, striking a chord with English readers and spawning a long series of imitators. Some stories published in *Fianna* might be deemed parodies of these popular texts.

Much more ink can be spilt over the general features of *Fianna*. In some respects, *Fianna* might also be considered as the 'youthful companion' of both *Irish Freedom* and the *Irish Volunteer*, the militant newspaper of the homonymous group that continued publication from February 1914 until one week before the Easter Rising. Like the former, *Fianna* boasted a militant and military posture: they both published increasingly strong appeals for the Irish people to arm and to take advantage of England difficulties – the "England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity" slogan, referred to the nation's military efforts, was a common refrain throughout their pages. With the latter, instead, *Fianna* shared many

[247] *Fianna*, February 1915, p. 4.
[248] Jérôme Aan de Wiel, "German Invasion and Spy Scares in Ireland, 1890s-1914: Between Fiction and Fact," *Études Irlandaises*, no. 37-1, 2012, pp. 25-27. See also: Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, cit., pp. 98-107; Elena Ogliari, "'Ireland First': The Great War in the Irish Juvenile Press," *Revista Alicantina De Estudios Ingleses*, no. 31, 2018, pp. 63-64.

similarities ranging from the stated objectives to – consequentially – the kind of articles and advertising featured in the paper. As Virginia E. Glendon sums up, the pages of the *Irish Volunteer* bristled with accounts of the foundations and initiatives of the branches scattered throughout Ireland as well as in London, in Manchester, in Scotland and in Boston. Many of the instructions provided dealt with aspects of active combat such as rifling, hedge fighting, taking trenches, demolitions of railways without explosives and the like.[249] Finally, with regard to the objectives, the Irish Volunteers first stated them in the *Volunteer Gazette*, the first incarnation of the *Irish Volunteer*, and later reprinted in their official organ. These were: 1) securing and maintaining the rights and liberties of all people in Ireland; 2) training and equipping a body of Irish Volunteers for this task; 3) uniting Irishmen of every creed and class behind these efforts.[250] The similarities between the two papers are evident and should be ascribed to the common soil from which they all sprang up – advanced nationalism. Furthermore, Bulmer Hobson is a common figure as he served as chief editor of *Irish Freedom* while being the manager of the *Irish Volunteers*, playing a considerable role as propagandist in both cases.

Among the similarities, moreover, one should mention the fact that some of the articles and fictional stories published in all these papers suggest a conceptualisation of political activism that was primarily addressed to Ireland's freedom, but not restricted to it. *Fianna* situated the separatist cause in the broader context of imperial rule, while explicitly challenging the imperialist enterprise. Expression of solidarity recurred with relation to the practices of resistance enacted by colonial subjects against British rule: basically, they compared Ireland's political and economic dependency with that experienced by other British colonies. The editors and contributors of *Fianna* clearly empathised with these peoples who were carrying on what, in their view, were legitimate struggles.

Discussing the actions and programmes of foreign nationalist movements or groups resisting colonial invasion was not a farfetched strategy by the writers of *Fianna*: in fact, it was reflective of a habit not uncommon for Irish nationalists in the early decades of the century, who often looked up to and commented on the Egyptian and Indian Nationalist movements.[251] The nationalism of early twentieth-century Ireland was deeply intertwined with complex strategies of anti-imperial resistance encoded at various levels of nationalist

[249] Virginia E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press. Ireland, 1900-1922*, Peter Lang, New York, 1985, p.
[250] *Irish Volunteer*, 7 February 1914, p. 9.
[251] On this subject, see for instance Kate O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire: Indo-Irish Radical Connections, 1919-64,* Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2008. And also: S.B. Cook, *Imperial Affinities: Nineteenth Century Analogies and Exchanges between India and Ireland*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, 1993.

politics. Anti-imperialism was an increasingly evident aspect in the imagining of free Ireland, emerging in the debates concerning Home Rule from the 1880s and, later, in the nationalist press.[252] In *Irish Freedom* it resulted in a promotion of anti-colonial struggles around the world and in the fostering of connections with revolutionary groups abroad. In brief, it resulted in the creation of a platform for a sharing of experience and intellectual exchange.

To sum up, all these similarities do not come as a surprise because they point to the orbit to which *Fianna* belonged. Yet, despite belonging to such a complex network, the editors of *Fianna* did not manage to win much consensus among Ireland's youth at first. In terms of circulation figures, *Fianna* was far less popular than *Our Boys*. Exact figures are hard to calculate because neither official counts were published nor the editors made any assertion about the sales, but Marnie Hay suggested that the paper sold no more than 1,500 copies each month.[253] She is probably right. From the section devoted to the letters to the editors and the editorial notes, it seems that the earliest numbers of *Fianna* did not manage to attract much interest outside the nationalist circles. Ideally, letter columns should attempt to foster an exchange of ideas among the readership. However, after reading the messages and essays sent by the young readers of the periodical, I would say that this section was geared to reinforcing an existing nationalist sentiment rather than to expanding the readers' base. So, the figure suggested by Marnie Hay might be not much conservative.

These calculations are partially substantiated by an almost farewell editorial in 1915, in which the editors advised readers that they would be unable to continue the monthly unless new subscriptions were made. Some nationalists, however, must have backed O'Connor and Reynold's efforts: sufficient money to continue publication was scraped together. Unfortunately, this editorial enterprise was forced to an abrupt end a few months later: *Fianna* ceased publication in February 1916. It happened, however, due to the intervention of British censorship rather than insufficient support. British censorship was crucial in determining its dismissal until the years of De Valera's office, when the paper was resumed and carried forward with considerable success. But the lacuna created by the suppression of *Fianna* in 1916 was immediately saturated. When *Fianna* ceased publication, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* were soon to emerge as the mouthpieces of the radical fringe of nationalism among the youth.

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[252] Eóin Flannery and Angus Mitchell, *Enemies of Empire: New Perspectives on Imperialism, Literature and Historiography*, Four Courts Press, Portland, 2007, p. 14.
[253] Marnie Hay, "Moulding the Future: Na Fianna Éireann and its Members, 1909-1923" in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, vol. 100, no. 400, 2011, p. 450.

II.e *Young Ireland*: Support for Party Interests and Business Nous

Young Ireland and *St. Enda's* – the two story papers still to analyse – emerged in later years, when a succession of short-lived separatist periodicals intended for juveniles failed to shake the British magazines' hold upon the imagination of Ireland's youth. In particular, the former was founded in April 1917 and conceived as the instrument to spread Sinn Féin ideology among the youth by the publicist Aodh de Blacam, who edited the paper under the supervision of Arthur Griffith.

Basically, de Blacam had the task of setting forth in clear and simple language the arguments that Sinn Féin was promulgating in the years around the General Elections of 1918. Therefore, a considerable amount of fiction and articles published in *Young Ireland* connected directly to the arguments of Sinn Féin and, first of all, to the party's primary objective. Since, in the Constitution of the party, it was simply stated that the main goal of Sinn Féin was "independence for Ireland" – the attainment of which depended on the duty of every citizen to work for the creation of a "prosperous, virile, and independent nation"[254] – it was no coincidence that *Young Ireland* not only featured accounts of Sinn Féin's political battles in its pages, but also stood for complete and absolute separation of Ireland from England.

It is legitimate to say that Griffith's doctrine permeated much of the non-fictional content of *Young Ireland*. With regard to the paper's view on Ireland's economy, for instance, *Young Ireland* not only doggedly endorsed the "Buy Irish" campaign like *Our Boys* and *Fianna*, but also championed the doctrines on economic matters of the founder of Sinn Féin. As an economic theoretician inspired by Frederich List, Griffith placed the need for protective tariffs above all programmes for free trade, which he deemed an economic ruin for Ireland: in particular, he implemented a plan for the development of Irish industry and trade that *Young Ireland* duly reported. Throughout a series of lectures published in the paper in the course of two years, 1917-1918, readers were provided with a full picture of Griffith's economic theories, especially his desire to transform Ireland into a self-reliant and dynamic industrial nation – a desire actually bound to fail in independent Ireland as de

[254] See a replica of the 1907 Constitution of the National Council at the following link: https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland//images/uploads/further-reading/Ed101-SinnFeinConstitution1907-VN.pdf

Valera, during its presidency, would veer towards rural populism, and the idealistic image of an autarchic religious nation of rural communities.

It should not be neglected that Griffith even served as *Young Ireland's* editor for a time, albeit discontinuously: his arrest after the Bloody Sunday of 1920 inevitably forced him to leave the post he had occupied the year before. Griffith's figure loomed large over the paper even after his untimely death in August 1922, as the editors of *Young Ireland* took pains to commemorate the man who helped to edit the paper and contributed to it. Griffith was praised for "He laid deep the practical foundation of that Gaelic state of which he dreamed, and which he went far to resurrect and to disentomb from out of the ages. […] He had left much behind him to inform, to inspire, and to guide us."[255] *Young Ireland* also launched a new column entitled "Arthur Griffith as I Knew Him", which was signed by Henry Egan Kenny and ran for several weeks.

However, though by far the most prominent, Griffith was not the only leading figure of Sinn Féin to get involved with the publication of *Young Ireland*. Among the notable contributors to *Young Ireland* there was also Herbert Moore Pim, who, at times, signed articles with the pseudonym A. Newman. A Belfast-born journalist, before joining the editorial staff of *Young Ireland*, Pim edited the *Irishman*, a bilingual literary monthly which circulated both in Belfast and in Dublin before the Easter Rising. A committed Sinn Féiner – he served three months in Reading Jail for participating in the insurrection – Pim revealed his artistic talent by contributing detective stories to the juvenile paper. In general, Pim brought his considerable experience to *Young Ireland*: the birth of the paper itself is to be connected to the efforts of the editorial team of the *Irishman*, which was thus duly advertised in the pages of the juvenile periodical.[256] More precisely, a mutual sponsorship through advertisement would last until the dismissal of the former.

The presence of staunch Sinn Féiners in the editorial team, however, should not induce the reader to think that *Young Ireland* was a tedious propagandistic read. Together these people managed to publish a quite popular paper, notwithstanding the difficulties which the British government and censorship placed in its way. Certainly, circulation was highly difficult during the Anglo-Irish War, even if *Young Ireland* was one of the few papers in the Sinn Féin orbit to escape the general suppression of September 1919. Military raids were frequent and, at a certain point, its manager, editorial staff and printer were all arrested. In 1919, the paper thus reached its nadir in circulation figures due to a tightening of British

[255] *Young Ireland*, 19 August 1922, p. 1.
[256] *Young Ireland*, 26 May 1917.

censorship. Although there are no certain figures for the whole country, a 1919 January report of a British County Inspector shows that *Young Ireland* managed to circulate only ten copies in County Down.[257]

Yet, despite the hardships of 1919, *Young Ireland* achieved considerable stature and influence in the country. The periodical was selling well in 1917 to the point that in June they had to increase the number of copies printed by several hundreds. The boom in sales figures also required changes in the management: in November 1917, *Our Boys* published a message in the Editorial Notes informing its readers that the editors were "requested to state that *Eire Og* (New Ireland) [sic] will be conducted under new management early in November and that it will henceforth be published in Dublin"; and as typical of the ethos of mutual support obtaining among nationalist periodicals, the editors of *Our Boys* concluded their message by wishing the "excellent little paper every success, and hope that it may be well patronized by the boys and girls of Ireland.[258]

This success was due mainly to the efforts of de Blacam and his business nous. Certainly, *Young Ireland* presented itself as a valid alternative to the flourishing British story papers: "last but not least, we can do our little best to push the sale of *Eire Og*, and thus to do away with the trashy English literature with which our country has been flooded for so long, and which has done so much harm to our boys and girls," reads one of the editorials. De Blacam managed to shape a paper that was able to oppose resistance to the forces of Anglicisation while fomenting pride in Ireland's past and heritage among the youths. In defining the paper's goals de Blacam, castigated the "paddy and stage Irish",[259] the British representations of the Irish. The lower-class Irish were indeed subject to a twofold negative cultural stereotyping, as the popular representations of the Irish tended to oscillate between the poles of ridicule and derogatory remarks. In either cases the Irish were deemed substandard if compared to the paradigmatic Briton. On the one hand, as Mary Hickman summed up, a widespread stereotyped image of Irish people depicted them as "inherently prone to violence, stupid, welfare scroungers, non-human (pigs); untrustworthy, unreliable, feckless, religious fanatics, culturally backward and drunken."[260] On the other hand, the Irish people also garnered the apparently positive connotations of spontaneity and lack of affectation, epitomised in the figure of the Paddy.

[257] Public Record Office, CO 904/108.
[258] *Our Boys*, November 1917, p. 59.
[259] *Young Ireland*, 26 April 1917, p. 1.
[260] Mary Hickman, *Racism and Identity: Issues for the Irish in Britain*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1996, p. 31.

Young Ireland was also conceived as a "truly Irish-Irelander paper". Thus, the pages of *Young Ireland* bristled with accounts of current initiatives in Ireland which reinforce the development of a national Irish-Irelander consciousness among the youth. It covered literary, entertainment and sports events which comprised the use or celebration of Gaelic language, folklore, melodies and games. With regard to the promotion of Gaelic language, *Young Ireland* followed in the steps of Eoin MacNeill, for whom the Irish language was "the most indisputable sign of an Irishman's nationality," and "a powerful and profound element of the nation's life", which was vital to the regeneration of the whole country. Expounding the connection between a regeneration of the language and that of the nation, MacNeill also extolled the Irish speaker as "the truest and most invincible soldier of the his nation."[261] Therefore, *Young Ireland* encouraged its readers to learn Irish language and folklore in order to revive the nation and save it from British rule; Griffith opened his column to the burgeoning linguistic movements like the Gaelic League, regarding their efforts as an additional weapon to forge an Irish patriotic character. At the same time, to instil national pride, ballads and tales drawing on Irish mythology and glorious past filled its pages. These were sometimes interspersed with virulent opinion articles attacking British government ad culture.

However, the content of *Young Ireland* was not mere propagandistic jingoism. De Blacam deprecated neither fancy nor imagination, persuaded that the young audience at large needed stories stirring emotions. His editorial line was characterised by determination to support for party interests combined with a shrewd understanding of the market. De Blacam and his collaborators could boast of a good ear for detecting current vogues in popular literature. For instance, at the turn of the century, the world of serialised literature reached a turning point in its history with Arthur Conan Doyle's creation of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. For sure, a detective who relies on logical deduction to solve mysteries had already been presented by Edgar Allan Poe, but the personalities of Holmes and Watson exerted such an impact on the collective imagination that there was a boom of stories with characters modelled after Conan Doyle's creations. If Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press could boast the sagas by Sarsfield, *Young Ireland* offered to its readership the detective stories with Philip O'Brien as their protagonist. To put it briefly, Philip O'Brien was a Sherlock Holmes with an Irish flavour and name: deduction skills, the ability to disguise himself are indeed

[261] These passages are extracts from three issues of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, respectively 5 October 1907, 28 October 1911 and 17 October 1903. They are reported in Virginia E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press. Ireland, 1900-1922*, cit., p. 6.

the *forte* of both characters. The detective stories with Philip O'Brien as the protagonist were culturally dependent on foreign influences, a fact that apparently contradicted their declared intention to produce truly Irish, home-reading material. Yet, even though they were not cultural sophisticates, detective stories à la Sherlock Holmes were harmless fodder which supported sales figures.[262]

This balanced mixture of instruction and delight proved to be successful among young readers, but the success was not enough to save *Young Ireland* from being converted into a periodical catering for both an adult and young readership. The conversion was decided by Arthur Griffith himself in 1921: considering the difficulties in stealing into print, the founder of Sinn Féin did not want to discard any potential way to get in touch with Irish readers and resorted to skills of *Young Ireland*'s editorial team.

II.f *St. Enda's*: In the Wake of Patrick Pearse

Nationalism and the equation between Irishness and Catholicism, with the second element of the equation conceived as a quintessential characteristic of Irish identity, were upheld also by the contributors of *St. Enda's*. The first issue appeared in March 1918 and its title was a tribute to both the homonymous saint and the Easter Rising leader Patrick Pearse. St. Enda, after whom the paper is named, is the ideal model: "because he was not only a glorious saint and a brilliant scholar, but a brave soldier as well; and because in our own day a saintly man and a cultured scholar and a fearless soldier, who gave his life to save his native land, selected St Enda as a model for the youth of Ireland".[263]

St. Enda's was Brian O'Higgins's attempt to rally younger fellow nationalists through the pages of a periodical which was largely an amateur operation, with many of its reporters and compositors being university or high school students. In particular, Brian O'Higgins brought considerable journalist experience[264] to the newly-founded *St. Enda's*, setting a clear editorial line, which was centred on the promotion of highly particularised notions of national activism inspired by the teaching of Patrick Pearse, the leader of the Easter Rising and founder of the Gaelic School named after Saint Enda. The editors and

[262] The talent for spotting vogues emerged also in the decision to present the kind of popular story known as "shocker", in which the hero relies on his own instinct and quick reaction for self-preservation.
[263] *St. Enda's*, March 1918.
[264] Before launching St. Enda's, O'Higgins had already served as illustrator and ballad-writer for many nationalist magazines and newspapers. In 1922 he was arrested and served a month in jail for his political activity. Until his untimely arrest, however, O'Higgins had provided many editorials, opinion articles and stories for the monthly. And soon after release, he resumed his position as editor of St. *Enda's*.

contributors of this periodical admired Pearse without reserve. Thus, *St. Enda's* entered the market which built the "patriotic cult" of the Rising and following episodes of militant violence, constituted by a "flood of rebel memorabilia, of postcards, mass cards, song sheets, pamphlets, flags, badges, pictures, photograph albums, calendars, and a host of other mass-produced items".[265]

Nurturing the memory of the dead hero, the monthly *St. Enda's* was engaged in carrying out his designs of nation-building, by striving to forge the character of the young Irish citizens, who would commit themselves to the freedom of their country. They claimed the importance of involving boys and girls in the struggle for national self-determination, truly believed that future belonged to Ireland's youth. The boys and girls of Ireland were indeed called up to "follow in the footsteps of her heroes, stand always for the stainless Right" because "no power on earth can hold [their] motherland in bondage".[266]

Despite this well-defined editorial policy, however, the earliest issues of magazine failed to attract the interests of the Irish youths. At first, the magazine had a modest following even among the children of staunch nationalists, because its editors' efforts to promote Patrick Pearse's ideas concerning Ireland, the role played by boys and girls in the process of nation-building, and education resulted in fairly haphazard choices. Expressing a strong distaste for the kind of stories published in British papers – in their view, they were not only jingoistic but also made to be hastily gobbled up by the young readers in their leisure time – *St Enda's* opted for a radical move.

In the first issue, they explicitly declared that their intention was not so much to entertain as to instruct and spread nationalist ideas among the young. Basically, they tried to create a story paper without any appeal to the passions, a paper which jettisoned imaginative literature. The first issue contained many flat and insipid parts, which did not attract the interest of boys and girls in their vacant hours. To make things worse, the poetry featured in *St. Enda's* was pedestrian; its poor quality was best epitomised by irksome poems like "My Little Rosary", the first stanza of which read as follows: "I have a little Rosary / Ay! This many a day: / And on this little Rosary / My humble prayers I say".[267]

Given these unpromising details, it comes as no surprise that the cover page of the 1918 June issue carried this alarming notice:

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[265] Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923*, Clarendon Press, New York-Oxford, 1998, p. 207.
[266] *St. Enda's*, June 1922, p. 50.
[267] *St. Enda's*, March 1918, p. 20.

> A Crisis. Unless we increase the price per copy of *St. Enda's* we must cease publication. No reader would let *St. Enda's* die for sake of a ha'penny a month. Commencing with the July No. the price per copy will be 1 ½d. Order *St. Enda's* and *Irish Fun* in the same shop every month in advance.[268]

Yet, not unlike *Fianna*, *St. Enda's* managed to recover and successfully continued publication and even grew in size in the course of the year 1920, as pointed out by a notice published in the Christmas number of the previous year: "As you will see by advertisements in this number," the editors addressed their readership, "we are about to enlarge and improve *St. Enda's*. The page will be the same size as the page in *Irish Fun*, and the type will be large and clear and easily read. The price will remain at present…".[269] This move was not a leap in the dark. One year later, the editors showed off the success garnered by the magazine: "Irish Fun and St. Enda's were sold out last month four days after the date of publication, Order your copy every month in time" was the headline of the 1921 September issue.[270]

O'Higgins's monthly had received support from the influential advanced nationalist circles, including those involved in the press market. In May 1918 *St. Enda's* had already published a message from the editors of *Young Ireland*, which is emblematic of the mutual help these periodicals granted to each other. After spotting it in an earlier issue of *Young Ireland*, the editors published the following notice in the pages of *St. Enda's* in May 1918:

> A Press Message. *Eire Og*, which has ceased to cater exclusively for young people, and is now a virile political weekly, says of *St.Enda's* in its issue of April 6th: 'Cead mile failte to brian na Banban's little gem. We had scruples when changing our paper to a political journal, but the juveniles are catered for by Brian with a freshness we had aimed at but missed. Go geutighthear a saothar leis'.[271]

But the mutual support obtaining in separatist circles was not confined to messages of praise. A further evidence of this ethos of mutual support was the joining in the editorial team of expert journalists like Neasa, who made a substantial contribution to the paper's growth and development. It is perfectly legitimate to think that the inclusion of more expert contributors in the editorial team determined a shift in *St. Enda's* policy, enabling the publication of more thrilling narratives. To corroborate this hypothesis we can take into account that, after

[268] *St. Enda's*, June 1918, cover page.
[269] *St. Enda's*, Christmas Number 1919, p. 376.
[270] *St. Enda's*, September 1921, p. 1.
[271] *St. Enda's*, May 1918.

Neasa's arrival, *St. Enda's* even featured fictional stories that had already appeared in the other story papers and had proved successful among Ireland's youths.[272]

Certainly, the policy that O'Higgins had first adopted was not the key to popularity and O'Higgins and his collaborators must have acknowledged their mistake. The editors had expected that a reading of the first issue would entail a change of heart by the young readers, and they were disappointed that it did not but tried to emerge from the impasse. As a result, the story paper was forced to give up any unrealistic expectation about the public taste and modify its editorial line, with the editors turning their energies to seeking out writers able to appeal to a mass public.[273]

After the initial moment of editorial crisis, therefore, all the tales offered plenty of action and suspenseful plots keeping readers spellbound. Historical tales occurred with moderate frequency. The limited – if compared to *Our Boys* – body of historical writing conveyed the unproblematised image of a brutal Britain that violently repressed the formerly independent Irish people. Britain's unscrupulous policy, though, is first and foremost the subject of stories fictionalising contemporary events. The most popular stories, indeed, dealt with contemporary events and were set in Ireland. Their settings ranged from the trenches of the First World War to the countryside battlefields of the Anglo-Irish war; their protagonists were young boys or girls – they could easily be a surrogate for their readers – who, at a young age, had to face British brutality at first hand. In the stories set in the early 1920s, for instance, the contributors lingered on the crimes of the Black and Tans, bestowing their narratives with a great persuasive force that was geared to justify the violent reactions of the IRA.

Certainly, what made *St. Enda's* a *unicum* in the Irish paper landscape of the time was the fact of being the editorial product of young contributors, only a few years older than the periodical's readers. This is why St. Enda's provides us with a privileged point of view over what the youngster thought about the Irish sporting culture.

[272] See the Christmas Double Number of 1919: it featured stories that had been published in *Young Ireland* two years before.
[273] Although the editors and contributors might not have conceptualised an ideal reader of *St. Enda's*, aiming at a broad cross-sectional readership, the paper was presumably popular, first and foremost, among the sons and daughters of nationalists.

APPENDIX
TO CHAPTERS I AND II

Daughters of the Nation? Irish Girls and Sport

Centring this study on the representation of sport in the papers for boys, along with understanding the revival of Gaelic games in the broader context of the discourse on Irish masculinities, leaves open the question of the relationship between girlhood and sport in Ireland. In reality, few scholars have attempted to tackle this issue. Both the themes of female participation in sport and juvenile literature for girls – or, the representation of girlhood in periodical literature – are underdeveloped subjects in the context of Irish Studies. With regard to the latter, Jane Elizabeth Dougherty has contended that Irish girlhood narrative remains a largely uncharted field of study, whereas Irish boyhood narrative has been "canonized, prize-winning, best-selling, and even parodied".[274] Moreover, the examination of the representations of girlhood in Irish literature – not only in periodicals – has been almost exclusively confined to dismal portrayals of Irish girls between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which shed light on the drudgeries of adolescents growing up in city slums or impoverished rural Ireland. Often, these studies concentrate on how girls were trained to be good wives and mothers, and introjected the notion that their home duties should predominate. These limitations point to a lacuna in the current scholarship that needs to be saturated.[275]

And just as the scholarship on juvenile literature is patchy so the scholarship on the history of female sporting practice is. As Bairner noted in his own *Sport and the Irish. Histories, Identities, Issues*, "more studies of women's experiences of sport in Ireland are required".[276] Admittedly, this paucity of studies is not peculiar only to Irish Studies. The study of both Irish and international female participation in sport remains a largely underdeveloped area. "If you go to your local library and look at the sports book, they will almost certainly be predominantly about men. If you go to a university library, the bulk of

[274] Jane E. Dougherty, "Nuala O'Faolain and the Unwritten Irish Girlhood" in *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2007, p. 50.
[275] CF. Susan Cahill, "'Where Are the Irish Girls?' Girlhood, Irishness, and LT Meade." In Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler (eds.), *Girlhood and the Politics of Place*, Berghahn Books, New York; Oxford, 2016, pp. 212-227.
[276] Alan Bairner, *Sport and the Irish: Histories, Identities, Issues*, cit., p. 4.

the writing in sports history and sociology assumes male standards," argued Jennifer Heargraves. Women and girls did and still do have an interest in organised sport, but they have not received the same media and academic attention as their male counterparts: "most people only know about exceptional sportswomen, however – those who have broken records, been labelled as 'unfeminine,' or behaved bizarrely. Very little is known about the various types of women who are involved in sports, and the values they bring to them."[277]

Moreover, most of the scholarship on female participation in sport has focused on the obstacles met by girls and women in order to practice sport. For instance, upper class women in Victorian England were required to demonstrate that their participation in sporting activities was instrumental to moral and physical wellbeing, and that their female modesty was not under attack.

Interestingly, also the few texts written on Irish women and sport likewise highlighted the problems faced by women who wanted to play at sports. Margareth O Hogartaigh, in *Quiet Revolutionaries. Irish Women in Education, Medicine and Sport, 1861-1964* (2011), examined the role played by Irish women in the development of sport, focusing on the challenges they came to face, like the sporting restrictions in place until the 1950s.[278] Indeed, the Victorian notion that some games might not be suitable for women, because excessive sporting activity supposedly caused a diminution in a woman's capacity to procreate, was still current in Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century. Similarly, Ríona McGonagle, in "'Looking on for Centuries from the Sideline': Gaelic Feminism and the Rise of Camogie" (2013), offered a detailed analysis of women's great efforts to establish *camogie* – the variant of hurling for women – as a sport at the beginning of the century.[279]

Patrick McDevitt has observed that, towards the turn of the century, "the pastimes of throwing, kicking, and hitting balls around a clearly defined playing field under specific and standardized rules were deemed a male preserve".[280] The GAA was concerned with male sports only, to the point that the practice of *camogie* was regulated and promoted by the female members of the Gaelic League. It was a small group of middle-class women,

[277] Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*, Routledge, London; New York, 1994, p. 1.
[278] Margaret O'Hogartaigh, *Quiet Revolutionaries: Irish Women in Education, Medicine and Sport, 1861-1964*, The History Press Ireland, Dublin, 2011.
[279] Riona McGonagle, "'Looking on for Centuries from the Sideline': Gaelic Feminism and the Rise of Camogie" in *Eire-Ireland*, vol. 48, no. 1/2, 2013, pp. 168-190.
[280] Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win*, cit., p. 2.

feminists and cultural nationalists who established tournaments and clubs of *camogie* for Irish women who had the luxury of leisure time.[281]

And harking back to the feminist backgrounds of some of them, the founders of the Camogie Association charged their sporting activities with emancipatory markings, as the ethos of this new sport reflected its founders' desire to provide alternatives to female domesticity and to envision a team activity that would foster skills, leadership, and administrative roles for women; far from been relegated to the domestic hearth, women involved in the practice of *camogie* would build new female communities, in which they would work toward a common goal.[282] However, the association they established continuously struggled to find participants or locations to play; as early as 1908, the Camogie Association found it increasingly difficult to organise official matches: the *Annual Report of the Gaelic League* for the year 1910-11 reported that no "executive or league has been organized in Dublin since 1906, although some teams still practice and play friendly matches."[283] A struggle further exacerbated by the fact that inadequate support came from men.

The Irish clergy men thundered against a game they regarded as "detrimental to morality and female purity". Among the notable condemnations of *camogie*, one of the harshest was uttered by Mark Anthony Fricker, the Canon from the rich Dublin suburb of Rathmines. He was reported to have been "shocked and horrified to meet six or eight young girls on the bridge, carrying sticks, which looked like hurling-clubs under their arms". He was also "greatly shamed and pained, and hoped he would never see such an awful sight

[281] Marcus de Búrca, *The GAA: A History*, Cumann Lúthchleas Gael, Dublin, 1980, p. 93. In the speeches of the members and founders of the Camogie Association, nationalist and feminist principles co-mingled, as clear from the following letter, sent by a player, Cáit Ní Dhonnchadha: "We want to organize the womanhood of Ireland into one grand body, whose sole object, under that of national emancipation, would be the raising of the sex from the slough of a false and foreign civilization". Many of these women, in reality, were members of the Dublin Keating Branch of the Gaelic League, which was known for its markedly nationalist and political outlook and a number of them even participated in active combat in the 1916 Easter Rising. The letter is reported in Paul Rouse, *Sport and Ireland: A History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, p. 203. See also Senia Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 25.

[282] Riona McGonagle, "'Looking on for Centuries from the Sideline'", cit., p. 170.

[283] *Annual Report of the Gaelic League, 1910-1911*. No doubt *camogie* matches were still played outside associational limits, if we look at the popularity of the name 'camogie' itself. The Gaelic League women who established the Association were indeed so determined to carry out their plan that the word 'camogie' produced a vast echo during the revolutionary period, to the point that decades later Samuel Beckett resorted to it for one of his wordplays in *Waiting for Godot* (1952) as the tramp Lucky sputtered a long series of term related to sport: "in spite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts".

again crossing that bridge, and he certainly would not like to think that any of his parishioners would do such a thing".[284]

Analogously, the founder of the GAA Michael Cusack was far from willing to allow women or girls to actively participate in indigenous sports, reserving for them a "decorative function", i.e. the role of audience in a supportive mood to male contestants, as they were requested to attend matches in their "gala attire to flash looks and smiles of approval on their rustic knights".[285] More importantly, towards the turn of the century, the Irish increasingly viewed Gaelic games as transformative *media* that actively created men out of boys. A survey of the papers analysed in the present thesis seems to confirm that the "cult of athleticism" and the "sport mania" were avowedly masculine: the discourse surrounding Gaelic games at the time was framed within notions of assertive and dominant masculinity. And in the imagery of the "cult of athleticism", the body that the sporting boy should aspire to – strong, vigorous – was precisely that which girls were supposed to avoid.[286]

A bird's-eye survey of the thesis's corpus confirms the difficulties women and girls faced to participate in sports. *Young Ireland* was the only paper devoted explicitly also to girls and, since its inception, it featured a column devoted to Irish *cailini* ("girls" in Gaelic), which was distinguished by its preoccupation with the girl's position in relation to wider, national society. Here girl readers could discuss "their duties in the service of Ireland", like saving the national language and promoting home industry.[287] Interestingly, Maire nic Chearbaille, the editor of the column,[288] believed in the importance of establishing GAA clubs in "all Girls' Schools of Ireland", an introduction she regarded as "badly needed".[289] She envisioned school *camogie* as a means of enhancing the health of the next generation of young women, while regarding the training sessions and team work as opportunities for the girls to create a network of mutual support: perhaps, as the editor noted in several future-

[284] Quoted in Riona McGonagle, "'Looking on for Centuries from the Sideline'", cit., pp. 176-177.
[285] Mike Cronin, *People's History*, cit., p. 94.
[286] Paul Rouse, *Sport and Ireland: A History*, cit., p. 19.
[287] *Young Ireland*, 26th May 1917, p. 43.
[288] Very little is known about the life of Maire nic Chearbaille, as I could rely only on her contributions to *Young Ireland* in the research for this study in order to flesh out the author's life. From the paucity of autobiographical details in her article, it was possible to gather that Maire nic Chearbaille was a feminist fighting for the general enfranchisement as well as a graduate student from Dublin, with an avid interest in Irish literature and folklore.
[289] *Young Ireland*, 26th May 1917, p. 43.

oriented discourses, this network would later discourage Ireland's young women from emigration to England and North America.[290]

Some readers endorsed the editor's proposal, like Nora ni Lideadha from County Tyrone, who, in a letter to *Young Ireland*, wonders "why should the task of bringing back Gaelic football and hurling be left principally to boys?". The young girl, who attended the Loretto Convent, claimed that "girls can play hurling too, and they might also start a GAA, and so combine to contribute a share to the task of restoring again those sports and pastimes that the English have endeavoured to replace by their national outdoor exercises"; she also firmly believed in the integral healthy benefits of playing, insofar as Gaelic games were "of a bracing and healthy nature, and they would serve to develop our muscles and make us [Ireland's girls] better, not only physically but also intellectually".[291]

Unfortunately, there seems to have been little comprehension that girls wished to play, and not much acceptance. According to the editor, the plans to establish a *camogie* club in each school in Ireland were met with scepticism and, sometimes even mockery. In an article titled "Camogie Made Respectable", Nic Chearbaill vividly recollects the derision which welcomed the opening of a *camogie* tournament in Dublin, with part of the sceptical audience sneering at the "*cailini* [girls] who battled for the Cup". The editor, together with some colleagues, had "to rap on the knuckles" to win the respect of the public, a painful recollection that further confirms the obstacles faced by girls and women who wanted to participated in the Gaelic organised games.[292]

Furthermore, apart from this on-going polemic in the pages of *Young Ireland*, the theme of female participation in sports was seldom touched in the four periodicals. In the story papers here analysed, girls are consistently absent in the representations and discursive practices about sport. In fact, the notable exception to the rule contained in *Young Ireland* only reasserts the problematic status of girls in Irish sporting culture.

In reality, women's struggle to participate in sport was also reflective of their difficulty to enter the public sphere and, in general, of the ideology of segregated spheres then obtaining in nationalist circles. The gender roles ascribed by Cusack with relation to the sporting practice – with men playing and women staring at them in a corner – mirrored dominant perceptions regarding men and women both within the state and as regards the

[290] It should be borne in mind mass migration was then a national emergency and that women amounted to between 52.2% and 54.1% of Irish leaving for England and North America between 1890 and 1914. Cf. Pauline Jackson, "Women in 19th Century Irish Emigration," *International Migration Review*, 1984, pp. 1004.
[291] *Young Ireland*, 19th May 1917, p. 7.
[292] *Young Ireland*, 28th July 1917, p. 3.

struggle for national self-determination. In nationalist iconography, as Anne McClintock has argued, "women [were] typically constructed as bearers of the nation", but were "denied any relation to national agency".[293] Female domesticity was still a desired ideal in Ireland in Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century, and girls and women were extolled as the guardians of religion, Irish traditions and domestic values in the home. In the late nineteenth century, Reverend Brendan O'Reilly published *The Mirror of True Womanhood*, in which the Irish Catholic home is depicted as the "nursery of the nation"[294] – in particular, the domestic hearth fuelled by female care was deemed a powerful prescriptive instrument in maintaining societal and familial continuity as well as religious (Catholic) adherence.

Likewise, Mary Butler, a young college-educated Catholic woman and a propagandist for the Gaelic League, wrote a pamphlet in 1901 entitled *Women and the Home Language* which disparaged women's active participation in politics, whether on the public platform or in military activity, maintaining that "the greatest of all Irish schools is an Irish mother's knee". She upheld the league's more conservative ideology of the "separate spheres", for while she encouraged women to accept their role at the "hearthstone" she dismissed those who sought a less passive role as "shrieking viragoes" and "aggressive amazons".[295] Ultimately, it was suggested that national self-determination was the exclusive domain of men and boys.

As with papers intended for an adult readership, also *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *St. Enda's* promulgated conservative gender roles. Although both boy and girl readers were often addressed together in these publications, the periodical generally followed predictable gendered prescriptions for youth and future adult behaviour and action. If boys were described as the agents of national self-determination and the cornerstone of the future Irish community, girls were encouraged to take on a supporting role: girls were primarily seen as future mothers who thus should be morally equipped to take on their future roles of raising young Irishmen and of taking care of their physical, educational and spiritual needs. In the juvenile periodical literature, girls were relegated to an ancillary position if compared to their male counterparts: *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *St. Enda's* often featured stories depicting girls within a narrow range of cultural stereotypes – the caring sister and the altruistic fiancée.

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[293] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, Routledge, New York, 1995, 354.

[294] Cara Delay, "Ever so Holy: Girls, Mothers, and Catholicism in Irish Women's Life-Writings, 1850-1950", in John Countryman and Kelly Matthews (eds.). *The Country of the Young*, cit., p. 18.

[295] Similarly conservative concerns were a regular feature of Patrick Pearse's editorials in *The Sword of Light* which gave prominence to the need for the national awakening of children to their Irish cultural identity and language and he invested much in explaining the influence which proper maternal fosterage could effect in the matter.

Gender infiltrated juvenile periodicals, setting out an idealised version of passive girlhood whose appropriate sphere was the home, from which she could contributed to Ireland's struggle. The periodicals confirmed the traditional patriarchal view that Irish girls' role was to support their men in the struggle from the domestic sphere; and true "daughters of Erin" are extolled as the passive mothers, wives and lovers of Ireland's sons.

Girls' only acceptable avenue for patriotic contribution to Ireland's cause was via motherhood, insofar as the quality of motherhood was seen as directly affecting the quality of the "future generations". "Proper" motherhood is thus celebrated in the papers. *St. Enda's*, for instance, used to report an aphorism by Patrick Pearse:

> To the Irish mothers I would say that when at night you kiss your children and in your hearts call down a benediction, you could wish for your boys no higher thing than that, should the need come, they may be given the strength to make Emmet's sacrifice, and for your girls no greater gift than such fidelity as Anne Devlin's.[296]

Our Boys was likewise extremely conservative with relation to gender equality matters. The paper's stance was undeniably redolent of the conservatism of the Catholic Church, which in turn permeated girls' traditional education in Ireland. As argued by Anne V. O'Connor, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this was "influenced by the long standing French religious tradition of girls' education", which saw "a girl's future role within the family context, as a wife and mother with corresponding emphasis on the accomplishments and social graces".[297] Just as Mary Butler, so the contributors to *Our Boys* were aware of the changes occurring in the twentieth century with regard to women's role in society, but looked at them with despise, as exemplified by a passage of *The World's News* published in October 1917. Albeit conveyed through the prism of irony, the message was uncompromising in its contempt for women stepping out from traditional roles.

> Among the revolutions of war is the insurgence of women into sphere sacrosanct to the sterner sex. Woman suffrage secured large majorities in the English Parliament. American Congress sanctions it. Suffragette Pankhurst dreams of new conquests. One of her daughters is imprisoned for nine months in Melbourne for street rioting; another is hustled by police among a noisy London mob, advocating adult suffrage and abolition of the House of Lords. In India Mrs. Besant is interned for heading a popular demand of Indian independence. She recently discovered a new Messiah in Madras. Mata Hari, the supposed Hindu charming mystic, who could interpret old world philosophies and "Secrets of Om" by swaying of her dusky body, and who bewitched politicians and generals by Oriental dancing that would have baffled Salome, turns out to be a Dutch

[296] *St. Enda's*, August 1920, pp. 210-211.
[297] Anne V. O'Connor, "Influences Affecting Girls' Secondary Education in Ireland, 1860-1910," *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. 41, 1986, p. 85.

> girl paid by Germany, and wife to an English officer. The French have sentenced her to be shot. The Russian "Battalion of Death" have appointed themselves a woman Chaplain and eliminated St. Paul from their liturgy.[298]

Nor did its readers, even female ones, contest this stance. Among the readers' jokes selected to be published in this issue, there is the following:

> Two women met – one a kindly-looking matron, and the other a woman of the blue-stocking type. "Why weren't you at our grand meeting today?" asked the latter, looking at the little matron through her spectacles. 'We had a most instructive lecture on how to train children'
> 'Because," replied the matron, gently, 'I was at home doing it'.[299]

Sent by a Miss Molly Gallagher from Londonderry, this joke offers a stereotypical portrait of the blue-stocking woman, a far cry from the matronly ideal. *Our Boys*'s joke left little doubt as to the mainstream view on women and girl's appropriate sphere. Here, the feminine maternal ideal is placed in stark opposition to the New Woman's type, stereotypically portrayed with eyeglasses and short-cropped hair.

Figure 4 - During the First World War, large numbers of women were recruited into jobs vacated by men who had left for the front. Here, the cartoon published in *Our Boys* in the 1916 April issue makes fun of English women railway porters in wartime, hinting that they were not good at it: the woman in the picture pierces the man's thumb instead of his ticket. As with the piece on Mrs Besant and Mata Hari, also in this case *Our Boys* sneers at women stepping out from traditional roles.

[298] *Our Boys*, October 1917, p. 36.
[299] *Our Boys*, October 1916, p. 33.

Few voices protested against this *status quo*, among them Neasa. In the pages of *Irish Freedom*, which extolled only "boys of manly resolve and iron determination",[300] Neasa complained that:

> while the boys are being brought into line and are being taught and trained, the girls of Eireann are been left out in the cold, as if they were of no account in the fight for Irish freedom. This state of things is a shame and a reproach, and should not be allowed to continue.

Thus, she proposed that "something better should be done for the spirited young girls who would be only too glad to step into the ranks of militant nationalism". She demands that girls start to be trained for active combat: "it would be no vain or foolish act either to teach the girls not alone the lessons of Irish history and the sounds of Irish language, but also the first aid and drill and signalling and other useful things taught to the Fianna. Should not the girls defend their country as well as the boys?".[301]

The model would be that of the Boer young girls who "fought nobly and fearlessly". Neasa comes to the point of proposing as the topic of the competition of the following month the question "Is an organisation for Irish girls desirable? We want to learn the candid opinion of our readers on this thorny matter". Her readers – or, at least this is what Neasa says – responded favourably, putting forward a plea for the establishment of an organisation for Nationalist girls as "the strength of mind and body of every Gael, old and young, will be needed in the fight for our country's independence"[302] Unfortunately, no letter is to be published. We only gather that there was, though, someone not so optimistic about the project, as Neasa rebuked him: "Aren't you rather severe on us poor women?", she asked.[303]

An approval of women participating in active combat is also voiced by the author, "Southwoman", of "To the Young Women of Ireland", an article published in Irish Freedom in 1913. Southwoman here tried to demonstrate that women could bear arms for Ireland's cause, arguing that women were able fight because "the merest glance backwards at history shows that there is not a country in the world, Ireland included, where women have not fought and not fought well, at one time or another". "There is nothing unwomanly in active patriotism" she also commented. Unfortunately, the contribution is the virulent reply to an article published in the previous issue, an appeal to the young men of Ireland, as both the

[300] *Irish Freedom*, September 1911, p. 7.
[301] *Irish Freedom*, July 1912, p. 3.
[302] *Irish Freedom*, August 1912, p. 3.
[303] *Irish Freedom*, September 1912, p. 3.

title makes clear and by admission of the Southwoman as well. It hardly represented a majority view among the contributors of the paper.[304]

Analogously, most men resisted women's direct participation in politics. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Ireland was still a conservative and male-dominated country, especially in politics. Irish nationalist organisations, both those that favoured physical force as a method of achieving independence and those that supported the constitutional path, were almost entirely male in composition. Women were barred from membership of all Irish political and cultural organisation, including the Irish National League, "an open organisation in which the ladies will not take part".[305] Similar view were upheld by most men – and, as seen before, by women such as Mary Butler – few decades later, as they believed that political activism and engagement in the decision-making process would "unsex" women, whose patriotism had to be confined within the domestic space[306].

In conclusion, the introduction of the Gaelic games came at a time when discourses about girls and women's role in society and in the nationalist struggle were evolving and contested. However, it was also a period when the idealisation of women as mothers and, generally speaking, a conservative view on gender matters, were still widespread. Considering that sporting practice – as will be later discussed in the present work – was regarded as a vehicle to physically and morally regenerate the Irish boys who would later actively fight for Ireland's freedom and prosperity, it is clear why girls and women were conspicuously absent in discourses related to sports. In those papers like *Our Boys*, *Fianna* and *St. Enda's*, which tended to promulgate conservative gender roles and featured stories whereby girls were relegated to an ancillary position compared to their male counterparts, the silence on the issue of Irish girls and sports was only reflective of a more general conservative view on gender questions. In contrast, the fact that *Young Ireland* was the only juvenile paper tackling the issue can be explained by pointing to the general editorial line of the paper, which was more progressive: it even campaigned for equal citizenship and women's enfranchisement.

At the same time, however, the general occlusion of the theme "Irish girl and sports" in the periodicals for Ireland's youth was counterbalanced by an inordinate amount of fictional and non-fictional writings relating boy's sporting feats or depicting boys

[304] *Irish Freedom*, November 1913, p. 3.
[305] Sinéad McCoole, *No Ordinary Women. Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years 1900-1923*, Dublin, The O'Brien Press, 2003, p. 5.
[306] Brigitte Anton, 'Women of the "Nation"', *History Ireland*, vol. 3, 1993, p. 36.

participating in the Gaelic organised games. The reasons underlying this wealth are explored in the following chapters.

PART TWO

Premise

The appraisal of the representations and discursive practices about sport takes as its starting point the extract from the *Irish Freedom* quoted below:

> I. The Gael is essentially an *athlete*, and has evolved a distinct group of athletic pursuits.
> II. These athletic events are not alone historically and traditionally associated with the race, but are largely responsible for his admitted physical prowess and skill.
> III. The preservations of such games and pastimes as constituted the recognised historical athletic programme of the Gael is alone justified as a matter of sentiment, but expedient and essential as a factor in our preservations.
> […]
> I. That race vigour, manhood and moral strength are essentials to the accomplishment of this obligation [i.e. the overthrowing of British yoke]
> II. That physical culture in a National organisation, inculcating discipline, co-operation and a sense of individual responsibility towards the nation in matters of National defence is the only means of maintaining our racial heritage of physique and regaining our historical autonomy; and, lastly,
> III. That physical health nor National zeal can co-exist side by side with a free intercourse with others who are inimical to our National rights and injurious to our moral and civil well-being.[307]

Through recurring assertions of Irish racial purity and manliness (exemplified by the phrase "our racial heritage of physique"), the passage is particularly illustrative of the fears that haunted the minds of the Irish people in the decades after and before the Easter Rising. Embedded, but not explicitly stated, is the notion that Ireland's male youths had been emasculated by the subtle, but pervasive, Anglicisation of any facets of Irish culture and life. No longer playing the indigenous games, the Irish boys had become physically deficient and further deprived of any connection to true national spirit. Yet the revival of hurling and Gaelic football was thought to effectively counterbalance the debasing effects of Anglicisation.

More specifically, the passage quoted above expounds the connection between a regeneration of the traditional Irish sports – and by extension the physical and moral regeneration of the Irish through the sport practice – and that of the entire nation. The regenerated body of the Irish athlete began to be perceived as the vehicle through which

[307] *Irish Freedom*, May 1911, p. 7

attaining independence, as hinted at by the claim that "race vigour, manhood and moral strength are essentials to the accomplishment of this obligation".

All these aspects concerning the revival of the Gaelic games are detailed and discussed in the following two chapters. The second part of *No* Shoneen*: Gaelic Games and the Athletic Hero in the Irish Periodical Press*, indeed, casts light on the steps that led up to the emergence of an Irish sport system and how Gaelic games came to be cultural signifiers pointing to Ireland's specificity at home and – as shown in the appendix to the third chapter – abroad. First, nationalists gave their unconditioned support to the Gaelic Athletic Association, which was devoted to restoring the traditional pastimes, emphasising the fact that the GAA promoted cultural distinctiveness and resisted Anglicisation.

However, the promotion of Gaelic games came to be justified on other grounds as well. As the contributor to *Irish Freedom* pointed out, traditional sports were believed to restore "race vigour, manhood and moral strength" to the Irish race, i.e. what was necessary to achieve national independence. By "inculcating discipline, co-operation and a sense of individual responsibility towards the nation in matters of National defence", sport could prepare the Irish youths to the accomplishment of this goal. Thus, in the second part of the thesis, I discuss why the early twentieth century saw the emergence of what can be termed "Athletic Hero". The last chapters bring to the surface the connection between the rise of the Irish sport system and the political and cultural investment on the youths of Ireland to demonstrate how Gaelic games assisted the Irish in the formation of a new ideal of boyhood – strong, manly and committed to the cause. In particular, whereas the fourth chapter focuses on the conception of sporting practice as military preparedness, with the young athlete regarded as the maker of Ireland's independence and the cornerstone of a new community, the last chapter traces the contours of the idealised masculinity embodied by the young Gaelic athlete. The objective is to show how the athlete's vigorous body was represented and extolled so as to counteract the stereotypical characterizations of the Irish as either "simian, drunken ruffians, or effeminate and feckless, childlike inferiors in need of Anglo-Saxon domination".[308]

[308] Patrick McDevitt, *"May the Best Man Win"*, cit., p. 18.

III

SPORT AS A CULTURAL SIGNIFIER

III.a The Gaelic Games and the Creation of a National Community

The main responsible for the establishment of the Gaelic Athletic Association was Michael Cusack,[309] bound to be immortalised as the Citizen in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). At different times in his life an athlete, hurler, footballer, hand-baller, oarsman and cricketer, Cusack was determined to halt the decline in athleticism among the Irish. Over a six-month period in 1881, he wrote three articles for the leading Irish sporting publication at the time, the *Irish Sportsman*, in which he expressed his dissatisfaction at the decline in the athletic spirit he registered in the country. A decline, he believed, conducive to a fall in moral standards: "if any deterioration has taken place" he argued "it is due to the modern indifference to field sports and to out-of-door exercise."[310]

As clear from the quotation, Cusack's first aim was to combat the moral and physical degeneration of the Irish – and by extension of the country – by promoting sporting practice and athleticism, regardless of the 'nationality' of the sport being played. The British origins of modern sport would start posing a problem only years later, when Cusack began perceiving the assimilative power of the British state and culture as a threat to Ireland's physical and moral integrity. It is significant that Cusack exclusively dealt with athletics in the articles for the *Irish Sportsman*, for it also means that his passion for hurling had not yet begun. The watershed in Cusack's life is indeed marked by the year 1882.

In the late 1882 after contributing to the first issue of the *Gaelic Journal*, he suddenly converted himself to the cause of reviving Gaelic games and sports and it is this "new fervent Cusack" who would be later immortalised as the Citizen in *Ulysses*, as the man who drinks porter by the pint and scathingly comments upon England's "syphilisation" of Ireland. As his biographer recalls, since that day Cusack swore to Ireland that he would "take hold of

[309] Cusack's primacy is not under discussion: both Mandle and de Búrca, as well as all their epigones, acknowledge that without him Gaelic games would not have been revived so early. See: W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association & Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924*, Christopher Helm, London, 1987, p. 1.
[310] The three articles are quoted in *Irish Freedom*, March 11, p. 7

the first *camán* that comes my way and call the boys together".[311] Keeping his promises, a month later he founded the Dublin Hurling Club, and in 1883 the Academy Hurling Club, the first two incarnations of the GAA, which was eventually established in November 1884.

Cusack, who took upon himself to codify hurling, could draw upon an ancient sporting tradition, as the game of hurling was said to have a millennial history that extended into legend. A brief reference to Marcus de Búrca's monumental *The GAA. A History* is here necessary. As the title suggests, *The GAA. A History* is the author's attempt to provide an account of the revival in the 1880s of native Irish games and pastimes, and to assess the role of the Association in the community since its foundation, including, in particular, its influence on the national movement before the establishment in 1922 of an independent Irish State. Despite its focus on the early years of the GAA, however, the book begins by looking back to "the dawn of civilization" in Ireland, when hurling was already being played. In this section, de Búrca, basing his assumptions on O'Maolfabhail's *Camán: Two Thousand Years of Hurling in Ireland* (1973), states that "the national game of hurling has been a distinctively Irish pastime for at least two thousand years". In his historical survey he then moves on to demonstrate that few changes have occurred in the two past millennia, because the GAA only took over the Leinster game, a style of hurling played in summertime in the province of Leinster, though adding stylistic elements typical of other counties. The Leinster hurling, in turn, was basically the same game as the one featured widely in rural folklore and described in the Brehon Laws of pre-Christian Ireland.

Yet the hurling revived by Cusack has often been described as an invented tradition that bears only a superficial resemblance to the game played in pre-Christian Ireland. As the Gaelic games propagated by the GAA were not an example of "cultural revival, but rather reinvention", because they did not represent "a return to the rough-and-tumble participatory sports of the Irish countryside; instead they represented a spectator sport adapted to the needs of an emerging consumer society". In particular, the GAA met the needs of the wealthier areas of the countryside, where traditional games and pastimes had been largely

[311] I draw these pieces of information from W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association & Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924*, pp. 1-13.

forgotten.[312] Gaelic games were thus the bowdlerized version of the authentic tradition, adapted to conform to the expectations of middle-class Victorian morality.[313]

In the 1880s, the first matches of hurling and Gaelic football fascinated for their reliance of physical combat: the play was fierce and players seemed "men lovingly at war". As time passed, however, a refined preparation and the implementation of a new set of rules allowed for a more skilful play, even if Gaelic games never lost their devotion to physical combat.[314] In 1886, the GAA had to tackle necessarily the problem of defining more precisely its rules for football and hurling: the codification was mainly geared, on the one hand, to minimising the amount of rough play during a match so that violent conduct was forbidden, and on the other hand to promote order. Daniel Corkery, in his notes for the never written "The Romance of Nation Building", enthusiastically recalled the evolution of hurling and mused over "the very early days of the revival of hurling – what a crude beginning it was. What haphazard arrangements, what uncomeliness everywhere, what rough play, what slack discipline. When comparing all that with what one sees at all an All-Ireland Final, how can we help exclaiming 'There's a job done, and well done'."[315]

The phrase "invented tradition", however, suggests more than a discontinuity in the style of play. The appellative is charged with political and cultural significances, related to the fostering of a distinctive cultural identity to secure the autonomy of Irish social life from expanding English dominance, in this case exercised by the diffusion of sports – namely cricket, tennis, soccer and rugby – played first by the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and regulated by English-based associations.[316]

Declan Kiberd has argued that hurling and Gaelic football were just two of the numerous "ancient traditions" of the Irish Revival that, on inspection, turned out to be "cases of instant archaeology": the so-called Gaelic football was in fact "invented in the 1880s as a

[312] S.J. Connolly, "Culture, Identity and Tradition: Changing Definitions of Irishness". In B. Graham (ed.), *In Search of Ireland. A Cultural Geography*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 58-59. The same concept is reiterated by Hutchinson, who wrote of Cusack's take on sport as "re-invention of Gaelic football and hurling"; see John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish National State*, cit., p, 159.
[313] S.J. Connolly, "Culture, Identity and Tradition", cit., p. 59.
[314] Paul Rouse, *Sport and Ireland: A History*, cit., p. 35.
[315] `Daniel Corkery, *The Romance of Nation Building*, p. 3 (the title refers to the notes collected by Corkery for his never written study on nationalism, which are preserved in the Special Collections Archives of the University College in Cork). Despite the GAA's efforts to regulate the game, however, the association struggled in imposing a single version of hurling throughout the entire country – the game continued to be marred by regional differences – and maintaining order was difficult for the referees: episodes of violence and misconduct by players and spectators were recurring features of the earliest tournaments. On this subject see: Paddy Dolan and John Connolly, "The Civilizing of Hurling in Ireland," in *Sport in Society*, vol. 12., no. 2, 2009, pp. 196-211.
[316] John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish National State*, cit., p. 159.

consciously wrought antidote to soccer" and hurling was nothing but the Irish reply to hockey. These inventions were "at once a rejection of Englishness and a craven surrender to the imperialist English notion of an antithesis between all things English and Irish. So, if the English had hockey, the Irish must have hurling; if the English wore trousers, the Irish wore kilts; if John Bull spoke English, Paddy spoke Irish, and so forth"; in recent decades, this slot-rolling mechanism was derided by Sean de Freine as "the ingenious device of national parallelism", whereby for every English action there must be an equal and opposite Irish reaction.[317]

And as to corroborate Kiberd's hypothesis of the slot-rolling mechanism, Mandle pinpointed some similarities between the GAA and athletic associations in Britain, which are relevant in the present reflection. Despite the efforts to promote an image of Gaelic games as originating long before the era of British occupation, it cannot be denied that they bear the traces of many foreign elements. Notwithstanding the GAA's efforts to distance itself from whatever was Anglicised, it could not escape the contemporary impact of Victorian Leisure Revolution. Beneath a superficial hostility to English sport, the GAA was forced to imitate the features of Victorian sport such as its emphasis on morality, codification and organisation: "much of what the GAA regarded as distinctive about the meaning of its games was merely the result of the substitution of the word 'Ireland' for "Britain' or 'England'."[318]

Despite their dubious origins, however, the revived Gaelic Games garnered the interest of the nationalists and of the echelons of the Catholic clergy, who were deeply convinced that the restoring of traditional pastimes in modern Ireland, and the related physical regeneration of its inhabitants, would entail a regeneration of the entire country. Thus, although there were examples of clerical opposition to the revival of Gaelic games,[319] the GAA soon attracted the endorsement of many conservative clerics, concerned to insulate their community from the steady spread of English urban values and mores.[320] Clerics regarded the activities of the GAA as a means of protecting from corrupting influences and channelling the passions of youth in something they perceived as authentic. It should be noted that the support from the Church was partially the result of Cusack's commitment to

[317] Declan Kiberd, *Irish Writer and the World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 170. With regard to the social development of Gaelic games, Mike Cronin likewise maintained that the Irish often endeavoured to "define themselves in a manner that [was] oppositional to the British, rather than in their own terms." Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland*, cit., p. 38.
[318] W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association & Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924*, cit., p. 15.
[319] See, for instance, a 1904 article of the *Leader*, which published a letter from the Secretary of the Down board of the GAA blaming the Catholic Church for opposition in that county.
[320] John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish National State*, cit., p. 159.

the development of the Association. From the outset, he was ambitious and determined enough to seek the patronage of Archbishop Croke, who indeed came to support the project, conceiving the widespread popularity of English sports as indicative of a more complex moral and economic betrayal of the nation.

On several occasions, Croke is credited as co-founder of the GAA due to his unconditioned and determinant support to Cusack's initiatives. Here is the letter with which Croke accepted to sponsor Cusack:[321]

> One of the most painful, let me assure, you, and, at the same time, one of the most recurring reflections that, as an Irishman, I am compelled to make in connection with the present aspects of things in this country is derived from the ugly and irritating fact that we are daily importing from England, not only her manufactured goods […], but, together with her fashions, her accents, her vicious literature, her music, her dances, her manifold mannerism, her games, sports and her pastimes, to the utter discredit of our own grand national sports, to the sore humiliation, as I believe, of every genuine son and daughter of the old land.

Local sports, he argued, have disappeared and instead Ireland "got such foreign and fantastic field sports as lawn tennis, polo, croquet, cricket". He spoke in traditionalist nationalist terms when denigrating English modern sports as "health-giving exercises in their way, still not racy of the soil but alien, on the contrary to it, as are indeed, for the most part, the men and women who first imported". He saw an element of decline in manhood as he castigated the "degenerate dandies of the day" who "arrayed in light attire, with parti-coloured cap on and racquet in hand, is making his way, with or without a companion, to the tennis ground." Nor alien to Archbishop Croke's denigration were accusations of promoting effeminacy among Irish people, for he complained that British modern sports were "effacing our national features as though we were ashamed of them, and putting on, with England's stuffs and broad cloths her masher habits and other such effeminate follies as she may recommend".[322]

Croke willingly conceded his financial and political support, thus laying the foundations of the Association's success, which started defining itself and the sports it promoted in opposition to English games such as rugby and football. By 1906, the GAA had 900 branches, with 100,000 members. By the 1910s, the GAA was the oldest popular organisation in Ireland, for it had seen the passing of the Land League movement, and prior to the success of the Gaelic League it was also the most extensive organisation in the country.[323] An 1913 article in *The Freeman's Journal* provides argumentative support to the

[321] The whole letter was reprinted in *Irish Freedom*, February 1911, p. 7.
[322] Quoted in F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 40.
[323] *Irish Freedom*, December 1910, p. 7.

Irish Freedom's claims about the GAA's national progress, as it highlights "the unprecedented interest taken by the public all over the country in the series of matches played". Indeed, the Gaelic games were attracting big crowds as the quality of spectacles was improved by the refinement of training techniques and a more skilful play replacing the roughness of earlier matches. Relying his calculations on contemporary police reports, the historian W.F. Mandle has argued that the GAA a few months before the Easter Rising counted over 17,000 members spread across 500 clubs. Yet, by Mandle's own admission, the reports were far from being comprehensive so that it is legitimate to see the 17,000 figure as very conservative.[324]

According to Daniel Corkery, the Gaelic Athletic Association was successful in building an Irish community, the first incarnation of the Irish nation:

> I often think that the G.A.A. has been the most effective engine of nation building used by us in our time […] That portion of the Irish revival has succeeded, and I submit that if the G.A.A. has succeeded is due to this among other facts, that the implement suitable to the period happened to be taken from the shed. We have all met with strangers who have been impressed by the sight of an All Ireland Final. If they, turning to us said: "Show us now your literature, or your painting, or your architecture or music – some other expression of your communal mind to compare what we have just being seeing – something equally spirited and daring, equally native, equally established in the affections of the people – well, what could we reply? With all truth we could reply: You look for the flower, and we have only put the plough in the earth. The Irish Revival has but began.[325]

In Corkery's opinion, Gaelic games managed to do what literature was still striving to achieve. Hurling and Gaelic football drew together the Irish community:

> I recall being in Thurles at a hurling match for the championship of Ireland. There were 30000 onlookers. They were as typical of this nation as any of the great crowds that assemble of Saturday afternoons in England to witness Association football matches are typical of the English nation. It was while I looked around on that great crowd I first became acutely conscious that as a nation we were without self-expression in literary form. The life of these people I looked upon – there were all sorts of individuals present, from bishops to tramps off the road – was not being explored in a natural way by any except one or two writers of any standing.[326]

Similar feelings were voiced by the nationalists promoting Gaelic games. According to the logic of the nationalists, the indigenous traditional sports formed ancestral and authentic ties

[324] W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924*, cit., p. 175
[325] Daniel Corkery, *The Romance of Nation Building*, cit., pp. 3-4.
[326] *Ibid*., p. 13. The two writers "of any standing" are Padraic Colum and T.C. Murray. The former often contributed tales for little children to *Our Boys*.

that drew together a cultural community, which shared not only common interests but also a peculiar image of national identity. It was a cohesive audience that would provide the basis for a future unified national citizenry. Moreover, the GAA "offered indiscriminately to Sinn Féiners and Redmondites alike: zest for Ireland, tangible rather than rhetorical reminders of Irish nationality […] aggressively un-English games".[327] At the political level, the Association catered for all hues of nationalist ideologies, encompassing both the parliamentarian politics of John Redmond as well as the advanced nationalism of the Volunteers. Certainly, all of them regarded the Gaelic games promoted by the GAA as the vehicle for cultural nationalism championing a distinct Irish identity.

Mike Cronin, among many other scholars, reckoned that the playing and the development of Gaelic games since 1884 dramatically shaped Irish life far beyond the playing field. Sport has played a multifarious role in Irish history and within contemporary society. Not only is sport "a form of national popular culture" – he stated – but also "a forum for the creation, expression of maintenance of sense and ideals of identity".[328] By examining the fictional and non-fictional pieces on hurling and football featured in my corpus, it is possible to trace the contours of the social development of Gaelic games between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, shedding light on the efforts undertaken by nationalists to bestow popularity, symbolism, and meaning on the Irish organised games.

III.b Sport as a cultural distinctive element

As seen in Chapter I, modern sports, particularly the public school games of rugby and soccer, were a major and recurring element in the British boys' papers. The Irish juvenile periodicals immediately imitated their counterparts and models, but rather than dealing with foreign games, they gave their unconditioned support to the Gaelic Athletic Association emphasising the fact that the GAA promoted cultural distinctiveness. According to Coldrey, the Christian Brothers were even "mainly responsible for the Gaelic cultural revival of the early twentieth century through the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884) and the Gaelic League (1893)".[329] And, since its inception, their paper *Our Boys* promoted the activities of

[327] David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life*, p. 112.
[328] Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland*, cit., p. 51.
[329] As sort of evidence of the Christian Brothers' support for the Gaelic League, I would like to quote a passage from the *United Irishmen*: "in 1903 during the controversy over a suspected downgrading of Irish in aspects of the intermediate programme the United Irishman stressed the Gaelic League had received no support whatever from the headmasters of the Catholic colleges in its protest against the Intermediate Education Board, although the headmasters were meeting in session during the height of the controversy. On the other hand, the Christian

the GAA among an impressionable generation of Irish youth. The message quoted below, which refers to the inauguration of the sport page entitled simply "Sport", should not persuade the reader that the Christian Brothers considered Gaelic football and hurling as any other sport:

> Seeing that "Our Boys" is expected to have a world-wide circulation, we shall deal with those subjects suitable for insertion in this page from a broad standpoint, and endeavour to keep the present-day school-boy in touch with sport in its various phases, not only in his own country, but in other lands as well. Besides football, hurling and athletics, space will be found for cricket, handball and swimming. Other forms of out-door pastimes, such as hockey, tennis, and baseball may also be included, if found desirable.[330]

The last phrase, "if found desirable", deserves attention, because it hints at the editors' real intentions. Despite declaring that the magazine would provide news about sports from across the globe, and not only from Ireland, a survey of the paper demonstrates that no concession is ever made to foreign sports. No article on the "foreign" sports mentioned there, such as British tennis and cricket, was to be featured in the first decade of *Our Boys*. As Flanagan noted, when this is considered in the context of "a deliberate policy of the exclusion of 'foreign' games", it becomes clear that when the Brothers use the word "Sport" what they actually mean is Gaelic and nationalist versions of organised games.[331] Nor would the paper change its policy shortly after its inception, so as to provide a wide-ranging coverage of sports; on the contrary, the Christian Brothers did change only the title of the page – since November 1917, the heading read "Games of the Gael" and in it "the short records of the doings, month by month, in the Gaelic athletic world [were] recorded".[332]

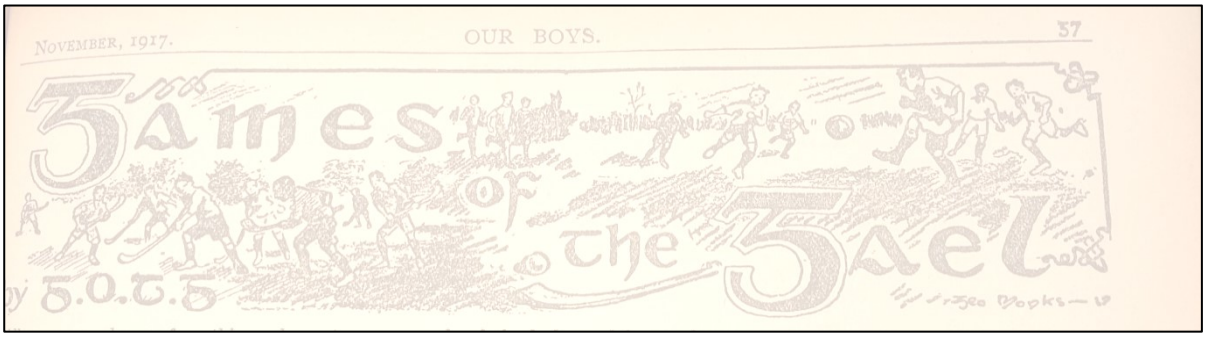

Figure 5 – The banner of the column "Games of the Gael", which *Our Boys* devoted to sport since November 1917. The illustration lends weight to Flanagan's statement that the Christian Brothers enacted "a deliberate policy of the exclusion of 'foreign' games" in their articles. In the banner, young boys are depicted during matches of hurling and Gaelic football and during a race of cross country running.

Brothers' Superior-General had publicly and clearly stressed his support for the Gaelic League's stance". *United Irishmen*, 24th October 1903.

[330] *Our Boys*, September 1914, p. 22.

[331] Michael Flanagan, *True Sons of Erin*, cit., p. 234.

[332] *Our Boys*, October 1917, p. 30.

Both sport pages – "Sport" and "Games of the Gael" – were clearly intended to assist the development of the GAA, to the history of which *Our Boys* dedicated a long succession of articles.[333] A primary objective of the Christian Brothers' monthly was to promote "the revival and planting firmly on our sod the games of the Gael", "so long neglected by the boys of Ireland", because they were representative of the cultural specificity of Ireland. The following piece reinforces the perception of the Gaelic games as emblems of Irish identity as well as anti-British (the games as "a factor that goes to make up our individuality as a nation"):

> those games are national assets as important as any other factor that goes to make up our individuality as a nation, and with their propagation and cultivation we are doing a part in our country's cause. We were always a nation of athletes from the days of the Tailteann games until to-day. It is a proud heritage, but one fears, alas, that too few Irishmen so recognise it. However, now that the country is waking from its lethargy, and with our Irish boys as well as *Our Boys* taking up the matter, I hope that we shall, in these pages and with the help of our readers, aid the development of our sports and pastimes.[334]

As an aid to "the development of our sports and pastimes", *Our Boys* invited all boys to "set to work to form hurling, Gaelic football and handball clubs for the coming winter" and the author of the column dedicated to sport gave advice about how to start a club. They hoped that "with the institutions of Inter-Schools' contests in four or five of the large centres, and a more generous support of athletics in the school generally, Ireland may succeed in regaining some of her prestige, and athletes of the type of the Leahys of Charleville, O'Connor of Waterford, Kiely of Carrick-on-Suir, and Roche of Cork".[335]

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[333] In September 1916, *Our Boys* started publishing what should have been a serialised "History of the GAA", contributed by an author called Tomas. Unfortunately, the following month, O'Sullivan – still noted in Ireland for his *The Story of the GAA* – wrote to complain "that the contribution was plagiarised from the series of articles which he has published in the 'Evening Telegraph', and is shortly reproducing in book-form under the title *The Story of the GAA*." Thus, the editors of *Our Boys* could only express their regret for having "unconsciously been the mean of infringing Mr O'Sullivan's copyright in a work which he states has taken up all his spare time for the past two years. We had not read Mr. O'Sulliavan's articles". *Our Boys*, October 1916, p. 14.

[334] *Our Boys*, November, 1914, p. 3. Similarly, in December 1918, *Our Boys* featured an article entitled "Organise!", which is another valid example of the monolithic nature of the monthly's coverage of Gaelic Games. Notably, the opening line of this piece is almost identical to the first statement in the 1914 November issue, for it reads: "Our games are a great national asset and as such they ought to be taken advantage of by our people. They are the means to the healthy physical development of the manhood of our country, and they should be part of our national life. Gradually we were surrendering every item that went to make up our individuality as a nation. Our language, our music, our literature and our games were fading into the dim past until the 'progress' of civilisation with which we were keeping pace brought us the biggest war the world has ever seen". See *Our Boys*, December 1918, p. 81.

[335] *Our Boys*, September 1914, p. 25.

Even after the achievement of national independence, the editors and contributors of the Christian Brothers' periodical continued to promote the establishment of hurling and football clubs in schools. Since 24 November 1932, the periodical – by now a weekly – hosted the column "The Athletic Arena", edited by the writer Seamus Laverty. In the very first issue, Laverty asked his readers their opinion about "proper schools' sports clubs" and how to make them thriving; the objective, set out by the editor Brother Cronin, was to "talk about athletic ways and means, and how best to spread the good work of General Duffy[336] and those who are helping him to make of Ireland a really worth-while athletic nation." General Duffy contributed to securing a place to Gaelic sports in the Irish school system, but there was still much to do, i.e. "to develop the athletic talent that is dormant in every school, and to foster the spirit we need so badly – as you must do, or your athletic patriotism is very thin, indeed".[337] Significantly, the column started under the aegis of the National Athletic and Cycling Association of Ireland, whose president immediately acknowledged the importance of communicating to the crucial target of Irish youngsters and thus expressed his "faith in the success of the Irish Athletic Revival movement as centred on the youth".[338] He was aware that *Our Boys* offered a potentially crucial platform to his Association's campaign on behalf of native games.

Certainly, *Our Boys* had already proved itself an efficient reverberator, capable to convert the youth of Dublin, the city exposed to metropolitan foreign forces, to the GAA. In December 1918, the editor of the sport column proudly reckoned that

> Great progress has been made with our games in the schools of Dublin. This certainty is cheerful news for all Gaels, because only a few years ago there were but a few Dublin lads playing anything but the game of the foreigner. Indeed I well remember how strange it seemed to the boys in the streets of the Metropolis to see a Gael carrying his hurley to play. And was it not a peculiar thing to say that the grand old game of hurling was no more than the symbol of savagery to Metropolitans? For such it did appear to him. But the fact that we have gone to such extremes and that we have now progressed so far in the restoration of our games in Dublin should give every one of us hope and encourage every lad to work, no matter how great the difficulties to be overcome, in the planting deep in our land of our own games.[339]

[336] General Eoin O'Duffy is a controversial shady figure in Irish history. Having fought in the Spanish Civil War for Franco and spearheaded the quasi-fascist organisation of the Blueshirts, he became president of the Fine Gael. Eventually, he was forced to resign on 21 September 1934, due to political inexperience, a mercurial reputation and a growing identification with Benito Mussolini that embarrassed his own party.
[337] *Our Boys*, 7th December 1932, p. 295.
[338] *Our Boys*, 24th November 1932, pp. 250-251. The president also declared his "happy augury that the many thousand boys who read your splendid paper" would "in future have the advantage of studying the articles by Seamus Laverty".
[339] *Our Boys*, December 1918, p. 81.

In the specific instance, it is worth noting that the author's distinction between "Metropolitans" and "Gaels", to differentiate Irish anglophiles from the followers of native games, was more than a journalistic convention in the days of *Our Boys*. The latter appellation ("Gaels") stands out as a clear statement of cultural and racial distinctiveness, while the whole passage reasserts the central role Gaelic games played in establishing and safeguarding the "continuity of Irish life". In those days, moreover, the term "Gael" also possessed a distinctive masculine overtone, not explicit in the given example, that deserves further analysis and remarks – this aspect will be dealt in the last chapter entitled "The Athletic Hero".

In brief, the Christian Brothers contributed considerably to the development of the Gaelic Athletic Association through the pages of *Our Boys* as they organised the games in both primary and secondary schools, a crucial target audience. They furthered this policy by including articles on the development of hurling and football, match reports as well as fictional material such as "Stealing the Makings and the Sequel", a story about a group of boys who stole the wood to make their hurling bats for the Galway county final.[340]

Not unlike *Our Boys*, all papers placed great emphasis on the introduction of the Gaelic Games in the school curriculum. Actually, hurling and Gaelic football were deemed crucial in forging the character of young people, of orienting them towards the Republic cause, to the point that nationalists raised the issue whether British sports should be played in schools. In January 1912, Neasa launched, in the pages of *Irish Freedom*, the competition for the best short essay on the question "Are Irish Boys and Girls Justified in Playing Foreign Games?". The winner of the competition, a boy called Padraig, denied such possibility, maintaining that "the native games are fitted for the temperament and physique of our people and belong to the national life and tradition of the Irish race, from which they cannot be separated. They also strengthen national ideas and give to the young, wholesome minds and healthy bodies".[341] His words resonate with the nationalist rhetoric geared to highlight the cultural individuality of the Irish nation, dichotomising Ireland from England (Ireland's "national life and tradition"), the Irish from the English ("the temperament and physique of our people").

[340] Michael Flanagan, *True Sons of Erin*, cit., p. 395. "Stealing the Makings and the Sequel" appeared in the 1918 June issue.
[341] *Irish Freedom*, February 1913, p. 3.

Similar opinions were voiced by Maire nic Cherbaille in *Young Ireland* – she believes programs in sports should be made more Gaelic[342] – and Patrick Pearse. As early as 1905, in an article for *An Claidheamh Soluis*, Pearse advocated the prohibition of foreign sports competing with Irish games in schools.[343] Committed to awaken a spirit of patriotism in Ireland's youth, he could but praise Gaelic games as they concur "to the systematic inculcation of patriotism and training in the duties of citizenship".[344] Coherently, hurling and Gaelic football would become the core sporting activities at his own St. Enda's.[345]

Figure 6 – The above image is the banner of the column devoted to sports that was recurrent in the issues of *Young Ireland* – "Sports of the Gael". As clear from it, the focus was on Gaelic games and Irish national pastimes such as Gaelic football and cross country running.

It should be borne in mind that the school was modelled after the legendary society of the Boy-Corps of Eamhain Macha, which had been formed by the king as he gathered about him a number of boys. The boys were allowed to make their own laws and elect their own leaders, while being taught chivalry, liberal arts and philosophy by the most skilled among the king's subjects also on the playing fields. Inspired by the sagas of the Boy-Corps, Pearse believed that the growth of individualities was made possible by "the scrupulous co-relation of moral, intellectual, and physical training, the open-air life, the very type of the games" which formed a large part of their [the legendary heroes'] learning. Thus, he strove to set up a school which would care for the mind as well as for the body.[346]

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[342] *Young Ireland*, 21st July 1917.
[343] Patrick Pearse, "About the Intermediate", *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 9th December 1905.
[344] *Prospectus* of the School, 1908-09.
[345] Brendan Walsh has collected a revealing anecdote about the sporting controversies at school at the time. It concerns the debate aroused at St. Enda's in 1909 by the proposal of introducing cricket as a summer sport. The proposal was made by a senior boy named James Rowan, whose nationalist credentials were not in doubt, as he had just submitted to the school magazine *An Scoláire* a poem lamenting the sad lot of the slaughtered Wexford rebels of 1798 and calling on his peers to avenge these "slaughtered saints". However nationalist Rowan's pedigree was, his own proposal failed to meet approval with the other students: another senior boy soon confuted Rowan's argument that, regardless of its British origins, cricket was played by the sons of "modern patriots", by claiming that cricket-playing sons of modern patriots were not necessarily themselves patriotic. To emerge from the impasse, Pearse, assisted by the pupil council, decided that the cricket proposal should be voted on by the school body. A spirited campaign ensued which led to the poll: the proposal was defeated by vote. No doubt that Pearse, to whom goes to the merit of having allowed the boys the democratic exercise of choice, was satisfied with the result. See Brendan Walsh, *The Pedagogy of Protest*, cit., pp. 250-251.
[346] "By Way of Comment", *An Macaom*, p. 14. Volume 1, no. 2, Christmas 1909.

We can have a glimpse into Pearse's school, and the crucial role played by sports in its curriculum, by going through the pages of the juvenile periodicals of the time. Evidence of the relevance of native games at St. Enda's is certainly contained in *An Macaomh*, which is one of the primary sources when dealing with school-life in Pearse's school. In the school magazine, for instance, we can find the essay "The Making of Athletes"[347], in which the pupils ravow their "determination to make Sgoil Eanna a name to be respected on the hurling field and on the football field": especially on the former, because they wanted "to show that hurling remains the game of Sgoil Eanna". Coherently, the school team was affiliated to the GAA.

The school-magazine, in its last pages, also featured a calendar which makes evident that football and hurling matches took place at least twice in a week and that sport was paramount. Nonetheless, many notices concern the election of the team captain, the athletic prowess of new schoolboys, the championship. As a consequence, the advertisement accompanying the writings (either fictional and non-fictional) is that of firms producing and selling *camans* or other sporting goods, like Crotty's LTD that sold Irish-made Jerseys, Hurley Balls, Gaelic Footballs and Camans. As convincingly argued by Strachan and Nally, participating in or attending contests of the Gaelic Games often turned to be a deeply political gesture, an aspect which was not lost on the cunning advertisers of the time, ready to strike the "Irishness" note in order to sell their goods.[348] Some of them, nonetheless, were sincere in their promotion of the spread of the Gaelic Games, being stalwart supporters of – as Patrick Pearse called it – "the separatist idea". For instance, the activities of the Gaelic Athletic Association were indefatigably sponsored by the Dublin-based nationalist firm Whelan and Son, which, throughout the crucial period of the early twentieth century, claimed that hitting a ball with a *camán* bought in their firm would equate striking a blow for Irish national self-determination.

Another couple of considerations, however, should be made, with reference to the doubts whether it was appropriate to play foreign games at school. The Catholic upper classes continued to enrol their children to elite Catholic schools where the preference for British sports and related ethos was still prevailing. Gaelic Games were not played, but soccer and polo were enjoyed. At the annual sports a military band played and English musical items dominated entertainments. These schools came in for criticism as "a good place for growing West Britons".

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[347] *An Macaomh,* Christmas number, pp. 53-54,
[348] John Strachan and Claire Nally, *Advertising, Literature and Print Culture in Ireland 1891-1922*, cit., p. 11.

The colleges drew sharp criticism from leading nationalists toward the turn of the century for delivering an educational product that differed only slightly from that of English public schools. D.P. Moran openly attacked the schools in the press for providing a "sound English education," believing the adoption of English public school signifiers such as cricket and rugby, Eton suits, Old-Boy Unions, and "school songs" to be a menace to Irish "initiative and prosperity":

> A "sound English education" is one of the graves of Irish initiative and prosperity. What do the people of Ireland want with a curriculum suitable to the needs of England…? The effect is the very opposite to the aim of true education, for it tends to turn out imitators, shallow despisers of their own nationality, simperers, prigs and bounders instead of men and Irishmen.[349]

However, restoring health to the Gaelic Games by publishing fictional or non-fictional writings on them did not mean only to strengthen the symbolical power of the games as emblems of Irish anti-British identity. Certainly, the retrieval of truly-Irish organised games helped avoid the falsity of a life of imitation. It seemed obvious to the authors previously quoted that the Irish had to improve their national stock by developing a uniquely Irish environment in which future generations could grow as distinctly Irish rather than standard British. Yet some further remarks on this notion of 'enhancing the national stock' are necessary, because they point to the fact that Gaelic sports were also regarded as the medium through which regenerating a people risking degeneration. This aspect becomes evident if we take into account the following article by the Celt, as it outlines the broader vision of the nationalists engaged with establishing the Gaelic games in Ireland.

In the issue of *Irish Freedom* of January 1911, the Celt reported an extract from *Celtic Ireland* by Mrs. Bryant which reads:

> The famine of sixty years ago almost killed the hurling. The National movement that originated towards the end of the fifties and developed in the early sixties forgot, or ignored, our ancient system of physical culture. In 1866 a feeble attempt was made to promote athletics in Ireland, but entirely on English lines: and the work of Anglicising us moved steadily and uninterruptedly for sixteen years.[350]

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[349] As evident in this extract, Moran was really concerned about the falsity of a life of imitation and the overpowering force of the British culture, so he was a staunch advocate of the retrieval of Irish pastimes and traditions. Re-learning the Irish language was another main antidote to counter the corrupting British cultural forces: in *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, he maintained that "We must be original Irish, and not imitation English. Above all we must relearn our language, and become bi-lingual people. For the great connecting link between us and the real Ireland, which few of us know anything about it, is the Gaelic tongue". D.P. Moran, *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, cit., p. 38.

[350] *Irish Freedom*, January 1911, p. 2. As seen in Chapter II, that Ireland underwent a process of cultural assimilation on English lines was a commonly held attitude among the nationalists and the contributors to *Irish Freedom*. The disappearance of national popular pastimes was often blamed on the Anglicisation of Irish life; as one commentator stated "the land, the laws, the language, were first attacked. Then, when the rancour of conflicting creeds infused greater bitterness into the struggle, the whole system and popular customs came

In the same line, the Celt often lamented the negligence of the native games "under alien but all-powerful influences".[351] However, his lamentation acquired a more blatantly pessimistic tone, as he was convinced that their disappearance would threaten not only Ireland's prosperity, but also the thriving of the Irish people. Only hurling and football could dispel the "approaching dissolution" of the Irish race by moulding a young man into a model of physical prowess and hardiness combined with devotion to Ireland. The Celt maintained that

> No movement having for its object the social and political advancement of a nation from the tyranny of imported customs and manners can be regarded as perfect if it has not made adequate provision for the preservation and cultivation of the National pastimes of the people. Voluntary neglect of such pastimes is a pure sign of national decay, and of approaching dissolution. The strength and energy of such a race are largely dependent on the National pastime for development of a spirit of courage and endurance. A warlike race is ever fond of games requiring skill, strength, and staying-power.[352]

In the passage above, the Celt thus raised the spectre of a weakened Ireland, no longer fond of the national pastimes that fostered "a spirit of courage and endurance". His words echoes those uttered by Archbishop Croke, who thundered against the "degenerate dandies of the day" "arrayed in light attire, with parti-coloured cap on and racquet in hand, is making his way, with or without a companion, to the tennis ground."[353] Both men pointed their fingers against the playing of foreign sports and the voluntary negligence of native games as conducive to the effeminizing of the Irish people. In their view, the logical conclusion to be drawn was that restoring health to the Gaelic games had to be considered as a pressing issue in early-twentieth century Ireland – "much of what is urged in favour of the cultivation of our native language applies to our native athletics and games", commented indeed the Celt. The Celt repeatedly advocated the importance of native games, assessing their merits:

> where they have been deepest-rooted, and flourished most, will invariably be found to be coterminous with those territories in which the native stock remained; native customs and ideals prevailed: and native virility was least impaired. Where they have decayed, you will find other race-marks equally obliterated or indistinct. This is neither imagination nor coincidence. It is a fact of historical proof and practically universal application.[354]

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under the ban. With changing fortunes, this almost invisible and stealthy process of race corrosion proceeds up to the present hour. Consequently, the disappearance of one native trait, however innocence or relatively unimportant, is a breach in the rampart of our defence against alienation." See *Irish Freedom*, December 1910, p. 7.

[351] *Irish Freedom*, December 1910, p. 7.

[352] *Irish Freedom*, January 1911, pp. 2-3.

[353] Quoted in F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 40. See also p. 118 of the present thesis.

[354] *Irish Freedom*, December 1910, p. 7.

Not unlike the Celt, also the contributors to the boys' story papers endorsed the idea that sporting practice, on the one hand, fostered a patriotic devotion to service among the Irish youths and, on the other, restored to the young Irishmen those manly qualities that Anglicisation had obliterated. In their pages, the young Gaelic athlete was enshrined as the exemplum for Irish youth.

As said previously, what is illuminating about the fictional and factual material published in the juvenile papers is that they allow us to understand how nationalists ideas were repackaged for a youthful audience. The values represented within the boys' story papers were rarely questioned and they were reflective of the way some commonly held attitudes and notions were constructed in these years. At the time there was, in the periodical press intended for juveniles, a convergence of discourses and a growing consensus on the desirable qualities of in a boy – how youths should be and what was to be expected of them. One of these notions was related to the nationalist belief that the experiences on Irish playing fields were to help rejuvenate, defend and give strength to the Irish nation. A new Irish boy, boldly masculine and committed to Ireland's cause, could emerge from the playgrounds. Through a focused study of the juvenile publishing industry, the following chapters explore ideas regarding ideal boyhood in early-twentieth-century Ireland, in view of the boy's important role in the context of the nation. In particular, it will show to what extent the development of a distinct Gaelic form of masculinity, which rejected the stereotypical perceptions of the Irish by the English, was built around the concept of a Gaelic athlete.

Appendix to Chapter III - Sport and the Irish diaspora

Before exploring how the games assisted in the formation of an Irish conception of a nationalist masculinity during the period from 1884 to 1916, I would like to illustrate how Gaelic games were perceived as signifiers fostering a sense of belonging not only within the boundaries of Ireland, but also abroad, among the diasporic communities of Irish people in the world.

As known, emigration is a prominent aspect of Ireland's history and a process which underwent a brisk acceleration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By 1890, almost 40 per cent of all people born in Ireland were then living outside the country, with the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia as their main destinations. These figures are the result

of a history of steady emigration from Ireland that dates back to the seventeenth century, to the flight of the Wild Geese and of all those clerics or lay Catholics hounded down by Oliver Cromwell's army.

Our Boys had a deep awareness of the external world and of the extension of the Irish diaspora. Operating on an international scale – copies of the periodical were sent to continent al Europe, to Australia, Canada, India and to many other countries[355] – it provided national and international news, as well as fictions set in far-off lands such as the serials *A Rover Irishman* by P.H. O'Donoghue, about an Irish-born cowboy, and *The Australian Bush Epics*. Interestingly, a conspicuous number of stories and articles published in *Our Boys* also cast light on the extent to which Gaelic games acquired a particular significance among Irish emigrants, for in the case of the worldwide Irish diaspora, estimated at around a million at the beginning of the twentieth century, Gaelic sports became an identity signifier of community that fostered a sense of belonging. At the same time, the editors and contributors to *Our Boys* were able to draw teachings from the stories of the Irish emigrants playing at the Gaelic Games.

Sport was so significant in the everyday life of Irish migrants overseas that the phenomenon could not pass unnoticed in the field of Irish diaspora studies. Indeed, recent years have seen the publication of McGinn's article on a precursor of modern hurling in New York in the eighteenth century, "A Century before the GAA: Hurling in 18th Century New York", and McCarthy's work on the GAA in Australia – "Irish Rule: Gaelic Football, Family, Work and Culture in Western Australia". Yet the scholar who most contributed to the current scholarship on the relationship between the Irish diaspora and sport was by far Paul Darby, who devoted his attention to the history and role of Gaelic games in the Irish immigrant communities, with special attention paid to the Irish-American community. In the following paragraphs I will take recourse to some of Darby's and his collaborators' insights to investigate *Our Boys*'s view on the play of hurling or Gaelic football as a common bond between the Irish at home and those overseas.

Our Boys regarded Irish mass-emigration as a phenomenon compelled by necessity. They were aware that for educated Irish youths expectations outnumbered the outlets available, and the prospect of unemployment or under-employment forced them into emigration.

[355] *Our Boys*, September 1915, pp. 17-18.

The editors and contributors of the Christian Brothers' periodical took side with the Irish boys and girls who had been forced into economic migration, due to Ireland's incapacity to cater for their needs. The country's industrial underdevelopment was deeply resented, while any promise for new job opportunities was welcomed with enthusiasm. In the editorial *The Times We Live In* of June 1916, for instance, the editor rejoiced to the news that "in addition to the great motor industry soon to be started in Cork, a further proposal to start great shipyards in Cork, like those at Belfast, is being considered". He was convinced that the naval industry was "one of the industries that would flourish in Ireland", and that "all signs showed that Ireland would at last resume her rightful place in the world's industry".[356] These moments of exultation, however, were interspersed with more sorrowful observations on Ireland's economy as interrelated to the phenomenon of mass migration.

Editors and contributors sympathised with the "young men gone to America" "to take all manner of degraded and nerve-ruining", and who "across the Atlantic are at heart sorry they ever left Ireland".[357] Coherently, they also harshly criticised those who gave the Irish youths false hopes about job prospects abroad, as when they observed "the great majority" who emigrated to England "do not find England the golden land of imagination pictured at an Irish fireside". Thus, "when the cost of living away from home is calculated, the net result is not much larger than would be realised at home. Besides – and let this never be forgotten – Irish boys and girls now working in England have lost themselves body and soul. […] Let those at home take warning, and do not learn the sad truth when it is too late".[358] However, the contributors never attacked the emigrants themselves. In the 1910s, *Our Boys* adopted a more inclusive and less territorially bounded view of who constituted the 'Irish nation'.

The Irish living abroad were not considered second-class citizens who did not deserve as much respect as those still residing in Ireland. Actually, the contributors to *Our Boys* took pride in the Irish emigrants who uplifted the name of Ireland among the other nations. *Our Boys* acknowledged that since the earliest episodes of mass migrations from Ireland, the Irish emigrants have been made a visible and lasting contribution to the foreign societies where they settled down, not only at the political and social levels, but also in terms of innovations related to the sporting culture. At the turn of the century, indeed, sizeable communities could boast their own associations for the management and promotion of the Gaelic games. Moreover, by contributing to the national prestige of the nation where they

[356] *Our Boys*, June 1916, p. 89.
[357] *Our Boys*, March 1917, p. 197.
[358] *Our Boys*, November 1917, p. 59.

lived, the Irish emigrants – defined as "fellow-countrymen" – also gave evidence of the best qualities of the Gaels:

> The GAA has made the name of Ireland as an athletic nation in foreign lands, in every country where the scattered Gael has settled. The 'invasion' of America in the year 1887 – when Ireland, through the GAA sent a team of athletes and two hurling teams to America – did more for athletics in the Eastern hemisphere generally than all organisation up till then, and the 'Land of the Stars and Stripes' has since reaped (with the aid of many Irishmen) its athletic harvest at the Olympic games. Handball, which was introduced there too by Irishmen, to-day flourishes. The GAA sent out his apostles in the nineteenth century and they spread the athletic idea throughout the world as they did centuries ago spread Christianity and religion. And even though by doing so, Ireland lost some of her best blood, and gained nothing materially, still the name of Ireland was uplifted among the nations, and all Gaels were proud of the athletic prowess of their fellow-countrymen.[359]

Despite wishing to see them competing for Ireland, perhaps at the Olympics,[360] *Our Boys* never refrained from celebrating Irish athletes competing for other nations to the point that they launched the serial *Irish Muscle*. In the first article, they extolled "Irish athletes who have long been amongst the foremost of the world", paying particular attention to the US national team. They revelled in the fact that "the most recent team of champion picked there contains eleven Irish names out of a total of twenty-seven. At the weight-throwing events especially the Irish-American sportsmen shine, and you will always find a Magrath or a Flanagan 'over there' doing 'star-stunts' with the hammer or the 56lbs".[361]

The series must have been successful because it was retrieved after the First World War, under the title *Irish Athletes of Renown*, running through thirty-two issues. Among the Irish athletes of renown were also those carrying high the name of the homeland they had left. They rejoiced at those who stepped up the social ladder by virtue of their athletic prowess. This was the case, for instance, of Pat Ryan of Pallasgreen who acquired celebrity in the United States in the hammer throw, and who "competed in the famous colours of the Greater New York Irish-American A.C.. so often referred to in these articles". As recalled by the author, Pat's was

[359] *Our Boys*, March 1918, p. 180.
[360] This was a much coveted dream. As early as 1917, they wrote of the Olympic Games: "perhaps, when this great war is over, when all the nations shall have adjusted their differences and peace is restored; when matters become normal again and the great Olympic games are resumed, we shall see our own Mother Country stand proud amongst the nations of the earth in one of the noblest gifts of God – athletic ability. Then we shall be proud that we did our part in bringing about that consummation, and perhaps some day look back to this paper as our inspiration". See *Our Boys*, October 1917, p. 30. In *Our Boys*, March 1918, p. 180, the editor likewise expressed the desire to see "the crown of victory on our Mother Eire's head, in one of God's noblest gifts, athletic ability".
[361] *Our Boys*, March 1918, p. 163.

> a wonderful career, of which we saw the beginning at home and admired and thrilled at its sustained brilliance at home. He never contested an English championship, nor does he hold an official Irish record. We can all exult in the hammer supremacy he has given us, and in O'Grady's sterling tenure of the heavier weight prestige in which Ryan also featured across the Atlantic.[362]

All these men were extolled for their athletic merits that uplifted the name of Ireland – indeed, the young readers of *Our Boys* should bear in mind that what Pat Ryan had done "redounded to the credit of his race and country" – as well as for having been living examples of the ethnic distinctiveness of the Gael, let alone the Gael's racial superiority in the sporting department. In the abovementioned passage on the GAA's "invasion" of America, the Gaels are seen as repositories of the "athletic idea", as apostles spreading it throughout the world. If racism does not emerge in that extract, racial undertones are certainly not alien to the following part of the description of Pat Ryan, as "in this super-athlete from Pallasgreen" – the author stated – "we have another living exemplar of what Irish manhood is capable of in congenial and native sports; and he brings close to us the persistence of the tradition of vigorous life which we have endeavoured to interpret through the performances of such votaries".[363] A didactic message is also embedded in these words, one related to the notion of a regeneration of the Irish race through the retrieval of traditional pastimes and a life of outdoor exercise.

The GAA clubs in the world were likewise depicted in laudatory terms in the pages of *Our Boys*, they being instrumental to the preservation of the Irish cultural specificity abroad. As noted by Darby and Hassan, Gaelic sporting practise ensured that the process of integration into the new society would not result in an annihilation of the cultural and ethnic specificity of the Irish émigrés. Besides constituting a strong bond with Ireland, Gaelic sports enabled Irish-born immigrants and their descendant to articulate and pride on their specificity.[364]

Other, and more important, causes underpinned *Our Boys*'s celebrations of the sporting associations abroad, though. *Our Boys* acknowledged that the fact of starting and implementing the practise of Gaelic sports abroad performed a number of crucial functions for Irish immigrants. *Our Boys* consciously addressed those Irish overseas that tended to congregate together in enclaves, which had as their focal point the Catholic Church, dance

[362] *Our Boys*, 18 August 1927, p. 868.
[363] *Ibid.*
[364] Paul Darby and David Hassan, *Emigrant Players. Sport and the Irish Diaspora*, Routledge, New York, 2008, p. 4.

floors, pubs, and associations responsible for organising cultural and sporting events. The periodical was not oblivious of the hardships faced by Irish migrants, those who "across the Atlantic are at heart sorry they ever left Ireland".[365] Its contributors did not ignore that the collective experiences of attending a club or a match of Gaelic games facilitated socialisation among like-minded Irish overseas and, by extension, "survival" in what might have been hostile and inhospitable surroundings.[366] This is the reason why the GAA's invasion of America was heralded with such an enthusiasm. And the articles on the Gaelic clubs abroad gave credit to their relevance in the lives of the Irish émigrés.

[365] *Our Boys*, March 1917, p. 197.

[366] Paul Darby and David Hassan, *Emigrant Players*, cit., p. 4. It should be born in mind that the twofold function of sport as vehicle for both personal "survival" and preservation of traditions was not an Irish peculiarity: several studies have placed emphasis on this dual function of sport for many immigrant population throughout the world. With regard to the Jewish diaspora, for instance, Beth Hatefutsoth has noted that for the young Jews sport was, on the one hand, a way in which they could attain success and fame; on the other hand, however, Jewish gymnastics clubs were established wherever the community settled down because they were deemed instrumental to the preservation of the Jewish cultural and ethnic distinctiveness, for the crystallization of national consciousness, if not as framework for the expression of Zionist ideas. See Beth Hatefutsoth, *The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora*, Tel Aviv, Summer, 1985.

IV

THE ATHLETIC SOLDIER

IV.a Sport and Warfare

In the Victorian and Edwardian Age, in Britain, sport was widely thought to ensure the success of the Imperial enterprise and the victory over its enemies. Sporting practice, in particular the participation into team games, was depicted as prodromal to the fight on the battlefield: physical prowess, the values of loyalty, *esprit de corps*, the discipline learned and developed on the fields of cricket, rugby or football, were supposed to come in handy when confronting Britain's enemies. Many saw sport as instrumental to the forging of both character and body insofar as it kept people's minds and bodies fit by constant exercise. The Duke of Wellington is credited to have said the famous aphorism "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton", which emblematically encapsulates the potent *mythos*[367] that depicted war in a romantic fashion, as a time for youthful heroism when to display widely acclaimed characteristics such as patriotism, camaraderie and athletic prowess – all of them acquired while playing at cricket or any other game at school.

Positive images of war and army were prevalent in pre-1914 British society. The literate pre-war male generation had grown up reading the adventure stories of G.A. Henty, H. Rider Haggard, the *Boy's Own* magazine, and best-selling accounts of the South African War which upheld an image of war as both honourable and glorious. Young men came to idolise the military heroes produced by contemporary imperial and colonial wars, whose deeds were duly celebrated in the pages of the periodicals. Their fictions, indeed, celebrated the glory of warfare rather than exposing its horrors. More specifically, warfare was equated with sport, to be 'fought by gentlemen and won by the morally pure'. Moreover, not only the

[367] Cf. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1975. Interestingly, also *Our Boys* reported the famous anecdote about the Duke of Wellington in an article entitled "The Value of Sport" – "It is said that the Duke of Wellington, when once looking on at the boys engaged in their sports at the playgrounds at Eton, where he had spent many of his own younger days, made the remark, "It was there that the battle of Waterloo was won!". *Our Boys*, July 1917, p. 296.

playing fields of Eton were coterminous with the imperial battlefields, but it was commonly believed that team games instilled into boys the essential qualities of a military leader.[368]

The passage from the playground to the battlefield was mirrored in stories like the one by Vane St. John emblematically titled *Wait Till I Am a Man! Or, the Playground and the Battlefield* (1867). Here the battlefield is but a playground for more adventurous deeds, where the virtues and skills learned at school are easily transferrable: "Jack's training at Mr. Crawcour's academy for young gentlemen, stood him in good stead now. It was a race for life".[369] Similarly, the now largely forgotten Newbolt,[370] in his own days, was admired chiefly for his poem *Vitai Lampada*, the final line of which is the famous "Play up! play up! and play the game!". Narrating of a schoolboy cricketer who goes on to fight in Sudan, the poem well exemplified the rhetorical proximity between warfare and sport as the final verse makes an appeal for the spirit of sportsmanship, loyalty and discipline learnt on the school pitch and which should be handed down from generation to generation.[371]

Fuelled by popular fiction, the potent *mythos* was hard to die.[372] Among the first who volunteered to the British Army in 1914 were "those who really, imagine that Wellington trained his officers between the goalposts".[373] Likewise, after hearing of the death of W.G. Grace in 1915, the English champion of cricket, the brothers Ross-Lewin wrote an eulogy that combined elegiac tones with the naïve celebration of the moral and physical training acquired through the sport practice:

> On Flanders's plains, at Dardanelles.
> Or toiling on the Tigris wave.
> Where Eden first our parents gave

[368] Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, cit., p. 13.
[369] Jack is Jack Haraway, the student of Eton and Oxford created by Bracebridge Hemyng protagonist of many stories published in the Victorian Age.
[370] Nowadays largely forgotten, through almost all his literary career Newbolt was both popularly acclaimed and admired as a poet by some of the most eminent men in British society. In fact, one of them was H.G. Wells. When Newbolt published the historical novel *The New June*, the author of the *Time Machine* did not hesitate to claim that the first part of it was "on the level of couldn't possibly be better". Moreover, as sort of evidence of the pivotal role played by public school in forging character, Newbolt's life had been marked by the indelible and inspiring memories of the days spent at Clifton school, where there was "a wide green sward, level as lawn, flooded in low sunlight, and covered in every direction with a multitude of white figures, standing, running, walking, bowling, throwing, batting – in every attitude that can express the energy and expectancy of youth."
[371] Colin Veitch regarded the poem as "the ultimate poetic expression of the ideological transfer held to take place between public school playing-field and the battlefield". Colin Veitch, "'Play up! Play up! And Win the War!' Football, the Nation and the First World War 1914-15"in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1985, p. 366.
[372] For an in-depth analysis see: Bernard Porter, *The Absent-minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004.
[373] Colin Veitch, "'Play up! Play up! And Win the War!', cit., p. 368.

A refuge from those sun-burned dells.
Today men speak of W.G.,
E.M., G.F. and W.G .

Of that immortal tree!
In sap and trench, in fire and flame.
Or Fleet triumphant on the sea,
Old Britain' sons aye play the game.
And mourn today for W.G .
We keep our end up manfully
And ever leave all hellish work
To Teuton and to Turk.

For Waterloo on playing fields was won,
And in the peaceful limes betwixt
The Empire that knows no setting sun
Was trained by games to hold the bayonet fixed.
In war or peace the same,
Just play the game
That leads to victory![374]

At the discursive and imagery levels, therefore, sport and warfare were tightly interconnected, with the former often narrated in the language of battle. This was not a phenomenon peculiar to the British context only. Sport was globally regarded as instrumental to the physical development of soldiers. As early as the 1910s, following the military triumphs in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania in the two-year period of 1911-1912, the papers *Il Ginnasta* and *La Palestra* – the mouthpieces of Italian gymnastic associations – extolled the virtues of soldier-gymnasts who were perfectly prepared and fit to combat an adversary more familiar with the hostile environment of North Africa.[375] The gym, rather than the cricket field, was coterminous with the battlefields in this case. And, with regard to this close interconnection, in terminology and rhetoric, between sport and war, the Irish periodical press was no exception. After all, "Ireland will always need athletes" ready to fight.[376]

Certainly, the pages of the periodicals abounded with metaphors drawn from the semantic field of warfare, employed when referring to the practice of sport. In the tale "Paddy's Conquest", for instance, the school playfield hardens the young protagonist – bruised and injured – to a soldier's life but also allows for a conferral of prestige and

[374] The Brothers Ross-Lewin, *In Britain's Need*, Erskine MacDonald, London, 1917.
[375] Paul Dietschy, "De l''arditisme sportif' à la fabrique du consensus: le ambivalences de la presse italienne sous le Fascisme", in *Les Temps de Médias*, no. 9, 2007, pp. 63-78.
[376] *St. Enda's*, April 1919, p. 223.

admiration on those who remain loyal to the group in fight situations. Both honours and sacrifice characterised the life of a young Gaelic football-player, "for Paddy was a footballer and had given and received his share of hard knocks in the stormy matches that had won him fame and honourable scars. There in the very battle-field".[377] Likewise, the poem by Crawford Neal that introduced the story Stealing a 'Makings' by R. Kenny, was firmly set in the idea of sport as prodromal to warfare, a connection further corroborated by the echoes from the epic poem genre contained in the passage:

> So, fashion a hurl from the fine young tree,
> And give it the grace of your blessing,
> 'Twill fare right in the whirl of play
> When the southern lads are pressing;
> And honour bestow on the dead below
> The meadow our heels are spurning,
> Who fought for the fame of the Gaelic game
> When the fire of their youth was burning"[378]

What is important, however, is that, as time passed, the rhetorical links between sport and warfare acquired a more actual form. As the contributor to *St. Enda's* declared, "Ireland will always need athletes", a concept reiterated also by *Our Boys* in the following poem, which was significantly titled "Boys Wanted":

> Boys of spirit, boys of will,
> Boys of muscle, brain and power,
> Fit to cope with anything –
> These are wanted every hour.
>
> Not the weak and whining drones,
> who all troubles magnify
> Not the watchword of "I can't,"
> But the nobler one, "I'll try."
>
> Do whate'er you have to do
> With a true and earnest zeal;
> Bend your sinews to the task –
> "Put your shoulders to the wheel."
>
> Though your duty may be hard,
> Look not on it as an ill;
> If it be an honest task,
> Do it with an honest will.

[377] *Our Boys*, December 1914, pp. 118-9.
[378] *Our Boys*, June 1918, pp. 244-245.

In the workshop, on the farm,
At the desk – where'er you be –
From your future efforts, boys,
Comes a nation's destiny."[379]

The still moderate *Our Boys* needed athletes because it wanted the Irish youths to actively contribute to the nation's wealth and its resurgence as a nation championing Catholic and nationalist values. But the very same words acquired a different meaning when employed by the contributors to *Fianna*, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's*. In their view, Ireland needed athletes because, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a war to be won – that for national independence. An article published in *Irish Freedom* stated clearly that Irishmen had the duty to be physically fit in order to be ready to active combat, indeed:

> if any two purposes should go together they ought to be politics and athletics. As political people we must be the exigencies of our situation force us into a perpetual war with England. […] We must maintain a stout physique, and cultivate a hardy constitution. A townsman unexercised in the field is stiff-limbed, short-winded, and unable to endure hardship and privation. This defect would tell heavily against the townsman in a war with any organised army".[380]

The periodical papers intended for juveniles reiterated and propagated this concept through stories, poems and advertisements. *Young Ireland*'s short-story "Shemus O'Brien", written by a mysterious "X", is exemplar in regard. The eponymous protagonist is said to hold "unchallenged sway in his parish" as a hurling player, and the narrator lingers on the eulogy of Shemus's sporting qualities – "on Sunday", the story reads "when Shemus held the *camán* in the grasp of health and strength, the ball flew from one end of the field to the other," and when an opponent "challenged Shemus's stroke, the clash was terrible, and the daring one's hurley either made splinters of or sent flying into the next field". What should be noted here is how the omniscient narrator frames the account of these achievements on the playfield within an eulogy of Shemus's patriotic commitment to Ireland. In the story, athletic feats *per se* are not worthy of praise: the author places emphasis on the fact that the protagonist puts his talent at the service of the nation and has become a leader of the United Irishmen[381] despite his young age.

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[379] *Our Boys*, May 1918, p. 215.
[380] *Irish Freedom*, March 1911, p. 7.
[381] "Shemus O'Brien" is indeed set at the time of the Irish Rebellion of 1798, which, according to Ben Novick, appeared frequently in the nationalist press of the twentieth century as a revelatory example of British oppression, because this historical period crystallised itself in the Irish collective imagination as a long succession of atrocities perpetrated by the British. This stance was reinforced in 1898, at the commemoration of

As befitting his status as boy-hero of the 1798 Rising, Shemus could boast all the necessary qualities – physical, moral, intellectual – that such leading role required: the impressive athletic skills are counterbalanced by kindness and patriotic commitment. Ready to die for Ireland's freedom and "of fine physique and powerful build", Shemus "was never afraid to face four of the Yeos single-handed": indeed, the English "had often suffered, and suffered severely, at his hands". Clichés of nationalist fiction abound in the story together with stock references to an iconography of martyrdom, as "Shemus O'Brien" culminates in the persecution of the young protagonist. The climax of the story occurs in a courtroom, with Shemus undergoing trial and uttering his defiant speech from the Dock, the epitome of Catholic-nationalist ideology: "but if your object is to learn if I have taken part in a rebellion to defend my country, I answer you, Yes, and for the part I have acted I am ready to give my life".[382]

With his speech, the young Irishman apparently seals his fate as he is sentenced to death: actually, in a fast-paced conclusion, he manages to flee from the scaffold on the day of his execution, another time relying on his physical prowess. The tale ends with a vision of Shemus going on fighting Ireland's historical enemies. Thus, Shemus figuratively joins the league of such boy-heroes as Cuchulainn, John O'Connor, who led the English to their death in the ravine, and Fergus O'Hara. All of them were boy-heroes who asserted the power of youthful Irish heroism against all the odds of a more organised enemy, thanks to their moral and physical virtues. Clearly, the author's primary objective in the creation of the character of Shemus O'Brien was to present an ideal of Irish boyhood, which revolved around the absolute identification of the individual with the Irish nation – a real entity in the minds of X and the paper's editorial board – and a kind of boy who puts his physical and moral qualities to the service of the cause.

And in keeping with the objective of encouraging boys to look at sporting practice as military preparedness beneficial to Ireland, at the beginning of Anglo-Irish War – begun in January 1919 – *St. Enda's* featured a story with a similar plot. Titled "His Model", this story by Liam MacFirr is unfolded through the eyes of a boy called Jack, the captain of the junior hurling team of his school. This young player is told to have a model, a Hugh O'Neill[383] who was once "the champion hurler of Ireland" and has later become a priest. Jack is destined to

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the Rebellion, in the discourses of the advanced nationalists. Ben Novick, *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda during the First World War*, cit., p. 91.

[382] *Young Ireland*, June 1918, pp. 258-259.

[383] The name attributed to his character is significant, as it was meant to remind the reader of the historical Hugh O'Neill, the Irish Lord who led the resistance against the Tudor conquest of Ireland during the Nine Years' War, which severely undermined English authority in Ireland.

meet 'his model' in a pivotal moment in Irish history, the Easter Rising of 1916, as the Father is attending to the wounded Volunteers during a British attack. Jack stares at the "handsome, healthy face, and [the] athletic bearing and figure" of the Father, who moves swiftly to rescue the wounded rebels from under British fire. His bravery is not to be rewarded in his lifetime: the day after, Jack would read, in an illustrated newspaper, that "Hugh O'Neill, the one time champion hurler of Ireland was shot through the heart whilst attending to a wounded Volunteer during the Rebellion".[384] The tragic ending, however, only makes O'Neill the ultimate exemplum to emulate – the title of the story is indicative of the author's aim to put forward a role model – because the priest, and former hurling player, exploited his athletic prowess and ability to move swiftly for "the noblest of causes".[385]

Besides short stories, ballads were the first choice when inviting boys to patriotically do their duty. With regard of the aims and objectives of the present work, of great interest are the songs appealing to the athletes and sportsmen of Ireland for a national regeneration such as "The Athletes of Eirann", and "Ireland's Hurling Men". The song "The Athletes of Eirann", to be sung on the melody of the air "Fineen the Rover", was first published in *Signal Fires. New Songs and Recitations for Young Ireland* (1912), a small volume by Brian na Banban (the Gaelicised name of Brian O'Higgins, the editor of *St. Enda's*) and later reprinted both in *Fianna* and, unsurprisingly, *St. Enda's*. Since its publisher was another staunch nationalist, that Seumas Whelan founder of the Dublin-based firm Whelan and Son, it is not a surprise that the collection *Signal Fires* encapsulates advanced nationalist ideology, which is then adapted as to meet the taste of a young readership. Denoting an unshakable trust in Ireland's youth, Brian na Banban's addressees are indeed the young men of Ireland summoned to "arise in Freedom's name", an appeal later reiterated to all Irish girls who will "have to toil for Ireland's sake" and "fight the Saxon mind".[386] For the songs and recitations incite to fight for the Ireland's national self-determination – "The Cause of Roisin Dubh" well exemplifies this aspect – or invite Irish youths to rediscover the country's heritage and past in works such as the literary homages paid to Robert Emmet and Hugh O'Donnell Roe ("The Death of Emmet" and "Hugh O'Donnell Roe") or the praise of the Irish language ("Welcome, O Gaelic Tongue"). Nor does the collection fail to invoke the young "Athletes of Eireann", who will overthrow the British tyrant:

[384] Liam McFirr, "His Model", *St. Enda's*, April 1919, pp. 231-232.
[385] *St. Enda's*, April 1019, pp. 231-232-
[386] The quotations are extrapolated from the songs "To the Young Men of Ieland" and "Young Ireland's Cailini", at pp. 86-100

A song for the faithful and fearless
The glory and hope of the Gaedheal,
Whose names shall be honoured in Eirinn,
Whose hearts will not falter or fail;
Who are true to the land of their fathers,
Who crawl to no Sasanach king,
Who are proud of their strength and their manhood –
The Athletes of Eireann I sing!

Chorus.
God strengthen the Athletes of Eireann,
To free her from Sasanach thrall.
To stand as the guard of her honour,
And march to the fight at her call!

When honour we give to the toilers,
Who strove thro' the gloom of the night
To combat the wiles of the Saxon,
When crushed was the Cause of the Right –
Let us think of the Athletes of Eireann,
Who vowed by the graves of her dead
To win back the light of her freedom,
And raise up her sorrow-crowned head!

Chorus.
God strengthen the Athletes of Eireann,
To free her from Sasanach thrall.
To stand as the guard of her honour,
And march to the fight at her call!

Though slavelings kneel down to the tyrant
And kiss every link of their chains,
The old hope still lingers in Eirinn
Of a fight for her mountains and plains;
And whenever the red light of battle
O'er town and o'er tochar shall glow,
In the vanguard the Athletes of Eireann
Shall crash thro' the ranks of the foe!

Chorus.
God strengthen the Athletes of Eireann,
To free her from Sasanach thrall.
To stand as the guard of her honour,
And march to the fight at her call![387]

The author delivers several messages in his poem pointing to the fact that Ireland must have total separation from England; that moral force may not be enough to gain independence; and that all the Irish must actively participate in the struggle for independence of the nation. Using various stylistic devices to convey his message, O'Higgins draws the audience into a

[387] Brian na Banban [Brian O'Higgins]. *Signal Fires. New Songs and Recitations for Young Ireland*. Whelan and Son, Dublin, 1912, pp. 11-12.

drama that envisions the people subjugated to the Saxon power, only to comfort them with images of the Irish athletes that will free the country from Sasanach thrall. At the same time, the author further asserts the impossibility of a peaceful transition to independence through the constitutional path.

Besides "The Athletes of Eirann", analogous sentiments are voiced in the songs "An Seoinin" and "Ireland's Hurling Men". The former song features a dialogue between the eponymous *shoneen* and a chorus who ridicules his mimicry. If the *shoneen* used to be "feted, respectfully treated, / And looked to with homage, in country and town", now he is sneered, looked at "with an eye of disdain" and even "banish all peace from his soul"; yet, what most is to realise the superior athletic prowess of those who "cry 'imitation'" and shout "for something they call a camán", whenever he "tr[ies] to play cricket": the unfortunate *shoneen* cannot but admit that he "never can beat them" as "they know all [his] plans and they baffle [his] skills". Thus, in the lamentation of the *shoneen*, the logic consequence of the hurling players' superior athleticism is the rebuke of anything English and the freedom of Ireland which would be gained by the boys who, having learned how to baffle their opponents on the playground will apply their athletic proficiency on the battlefield.

Whereas, in the latter song, hurling players are extolled as the "best of all", that is as the young men who "hold the hopes of bye-gone years" and "love the past – its smiles and tears", but are untouched by "quavering doubts and shrinking fears": by virtue of their stamina and bravery, therefore, they will "guard their name and love their land / With her thro' gloom and joy to stand". With the aid of Irish athletes victory is certain: they will strike the fatal blow to foreign rule with their "stout Camán", because "[no] English steel can match its blow"; and, as the sixth stanza recites:

> When come the day – as come it must –
> That England's rule of greed and lust
> Shall lie, all broken, in the dust,
> We'll still have Irish Hurling Men.[388]

If the hurler stood for the warrior fighting for independence, the hurling stick – the *camán* – became the symbol of a resurgent nation and of a new kind of man, bound to reassert his power and recover Ireland's sovereignty. Comments in the Irish press at the beginning of the twentieth century confirm the perception of the *camán* as the weapon of the battle for independence, brandished to drive out the British. In a letter to the editors of the *Southern*

[388] Brian na Banban "Ireland's Hurling Men" in *Signal Fires*, pp. 56-58. It should be sung on the air "Clare's Dragoons".

Start, a man stated that "Nothing, I believe, in the way of pastime, has ever approached in the way of martial grandeur, crashing energy […] and rousing enthusiasm, to the use of the *camán*".[389] Another pondered that the boys "who marched in military fashion, *camans* on shoulders" were the "true sons of the Gaels", the very personification of physical manliness and marital spirit as their legendary forefathers – "What soldiers for Ireland they would make!" is the author's final exclamation.[390]

These two extracts cast light on the societal interpretation of the hurling stick as a weapon training Irish boys for a future battle for independence, a peculiar connotation of the hurling equipment that is well exemplified by an advertisement (Figure 7) featured in the pages of both *Irish Freedom* and *Our Boys*.[391] It advertises a shop of sports goods, the very same tools – particularly the *camán* – that will be used to achieve national self-determination. Significantly, the caption, a stanza of "Ireland's Hurling Men" written by Brian na Banban, also hails the hurling player as "The Man of the Future".

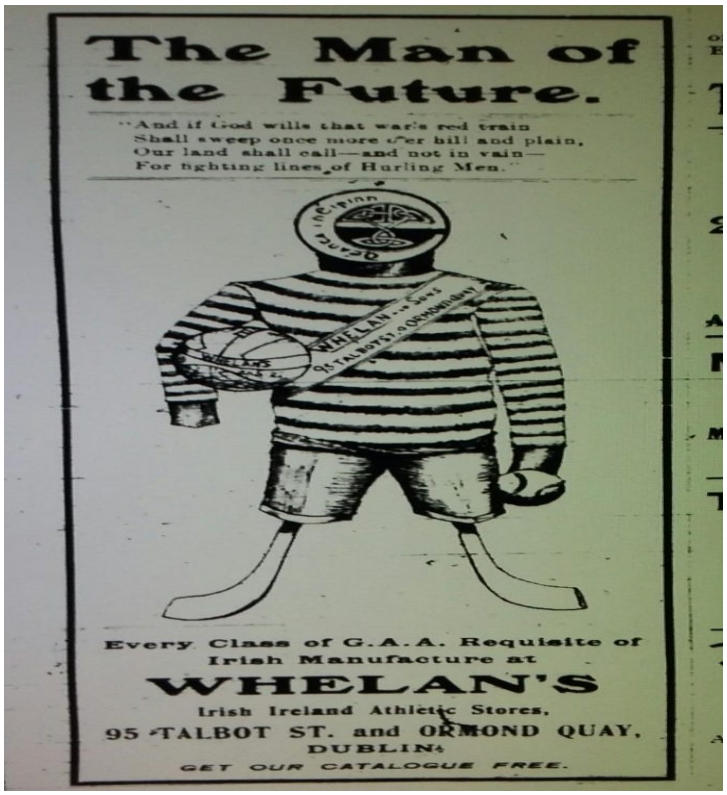

Figure 7 - Advertisement "The Man of the Future" with a poem by Brian na Banban that recites: "And if God wills that war's red train / Shall sweep once more o'ver hill and plain, / Our land shall call – and not in vain – / For fighting lines of Hurling Men". The face of the Man is the 'made in Ireland' logo.

[389] The Song of the Caman", *Southern Star*, 13 September 1902, p. 7.
[390] *Ulster Herald*, 17th March 1906, p. 6, reported in Stephen Foose, *More Than a Stick: The Contested Meaning of the Camán in Ireland, 1891-1914*, Unpublished Thesis, Marburg, 2016.
[391] *Irish Freedom*, June 1912, p. 4. *Our Boys*, September 1918, p. 768.

The trust in the subversive effect of hurling must have been quite widely spread because evidence of it is to be found elsewhere. For instance, the 1909 December issue of *An Macaohm* features an appeal to all the young hurlers of Ireland, which is also a direct quotation of a speech by Pearse: "I am certain than when it comes to a question of Ireland winning battles, her main reliance must be on her hurlers. To your *camans*, O boys of Ireland".[392] The belief was fully introjected by a boy writing for *An Scoláire*, the school magazine of St. Enda's, in 1913; in "The Old Order Changeth", the pupil lamented the worsening state of hurling at school and called on his fellow pupils to remember that "What was it urged those brave boys whose play you have taken to fight their battles [...] it was because they dreamt themselves as patriots leading mighty hosts to free their native land".[393] Rephrasing Wellington's aphorism, if the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, Ireland would achieve self-determination on its hurling fields.

Patrick Pearse would have not questioned the validity of this statement. Actually, Pearse himself wrote that:

> nothing has given me greater pleasure during the past session than to watch Sgoil Eanna developing as it has been doing on the athletic side. 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-field of Eton. I am certain that when it comes to a question of Ireland winning battles, her main reliance must be on her hurlers. To your camans, O boys of Bamba![394]

War, or better the fight for independence, was the progress of the activities on the playfield. In "By Way of Comment" Pearse also describes a dream he had which makes clear the straightforward passage from the playfields of St. Enda's to the battlefields of a war between Ireland and the Empire. Although the future Easter Riser denies to have carried on a political or revolutionary propaganda among the boys at St. Enda's, he acknowledges that he could not wish for any of his students a "happier destiny than to die in defence of some true thing" and that the school's peculiar teaching was meant to instil this aspiration also in the hearts and minds of the boys, to make them "feel that no one can finely live who hoards life too jealously". He also states "that one must be generous in service, and withal joyous, accounting even supreme sacrifices slight". As a corollary to this meditation, he describes a

[392] *An Macaomh*, Vol.1, no. 2, December 1909. The quotation is reprinted in Brendan Walsh, *The Pedagogy of Protest*, cit., p. 115.
[393] Anonymous, "The Old Order Changeth", *An Scoláire*, 20th March 1913, p. 3.
[394] "By Way of Comment", in *An Macaomh*, Vol. 1, no.2, Christmas 1909, p. 15.

dream he had nearly four years before, in which he dreamt one of his pupil at St. Enda's "standing alone upon a platform above a mighty sea of people" and the dreaming Pearse understood "that he was about to die there for some august cause, Ireland's". Of this oneiric experience, the detail that drew Pearse's attention the most was realising that the sentenced boy "looked extraordinarily proud and joyous […] just as I had often noticed them on the football field".[395]

IV.b Sport and Warfare in Ireland: Fact or Fiction?

Now, the obvious question to be asked is: was sport – or better the play of Gaelic Games – really conducive to the struggle for independence? If we consider what we know about the members of the GAA at the beginning of the twentieth century, the answer is only partially affirmative: the passage from the playfields to the battlefield (streets mainly) of Ireland was carried out by some of the hurlers and football players of the GAA, while others continued to choose the hurley rather than the rifle.

In *The GAA. A History*, de Búrca quotes a passage from a speech by Dan McCarthy, which conveys the idea that the rhetoric preparing young men for warfare through sport seemed on the verge of becoming reality in the Ireland of the early twentieth century. McCarthy, before becoming president of the GAA, said that "we want our men to train and to be physically strong so that when the time comes the hurlers will cast away the *camán* for the steel that will drive the Saxon from our land."[396] At the same time, we should take into account that some of the protagonists of the Easter Rising, the Irish Volunteers, charged the physical objects of the hurling stick, the *camán*, with political and militaristic significance: indeed, volunteers were armed with hurleys since the organisation's inception and after Sinn Féin slain the 1918 elections, they often paraded in military formation brandishing their *camáin*.[397]

Yet another couple of considerations should be made, because the situation was not as simple as McCarthy's words intended to make us believe. After an almost fatal decline in the 1890s, the GAA enjoyed a period of successful expansion at local and national level, accompanied and underpinned by the increasing popularity of Gaelic games. Among the

[395] "By Way of Comment", in *An Macaomh*, Vol. 2, no. 2, May 1913, p. 7.
[396] Marcus de Búrca, *The GAA: A History*, cit., p. 122.
[397] *Wicklow People*, 21 January 1911.

creators of this success were influential radical nationalists who strove for an independent Ireland and, bringing nationalist battles on the playfields of the GAA, set a series of rules for the activities of the Associations that sought to spread advanced nationalism among its members. In their eyes, the GAA clubs had to become instrumental to the project of national liberation as laboratories where to not only define a peculiar Irish identity, but also recruit new militants prepared to support an armed revolt against Britain. Worried about these plans, the Royal Irish Constabulary commented that "the Gaelic Athletic Association could supply an abundance of first class recruits" – young and active men.

Thus the GAA, the major sporting body in Ireland at the turn of the century, both influenced and was influenced by the seismic upheavals occurring in Irish political and cultural life between 1884 and 1922. Its history is deeply intertwined with that of the whole country. The Association experienced Fenian infiltrations at the time of its establishment and the Irish Republican Brotherhood periodically attempted to take over the reins of the GAA's ruling Central Council, as it happened in 1887, while perpetually trying to secure key positions within the Association's echelons. A few years later on, the cadres of the GAA grew to members of the Irish Volunteers, a potentially seditious presence that aroused the suspects of the British authorities.

In 1901, started the rebuilding of the GAA by the hands of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which made a propagandist use of the organisation. British authorities resented the fact that the IRB was recruiting new members from the GAA clubs scattered throughout Ireland and that "the general tone adopted by the leaders is hatred of England, and games of English origin are decried, concerts are got up where Irish songs and sentiments savouring of disloyalty are loudly applauded". The authorities rightly understood that the purpose was to get "a hold of the youth of the country and [educate] them in rebellious and seditious ideas, so that when England should get into fresh difficulties they may have to hand material ripe for a possible rebellion"[398] The British government was worried that the rhetorical passage from sport and warfare might acquire concreteness. As early as 1901, the police wrote of the GAA as a threat to national security: "The Gaelic League educates the brain," a report reads "and the Gaelic Athletic Association trains the body, and inculcates those ideas of military discipline which would be very dangerous in a revolutionary crisis".[399]

[398] State Paper Office DICS Precis, 1-17 May 1902, reported in W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association & Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924*, cit., p. 131.
[399] Colonial Office Papers, Précis of Information received, 904/72, February 1901. Quoted in John Hutchinson, The *Dynamics of Nationalism*, cit., p. 290.

Indeed, hundreds of GAA members took an active role in both the planning and the execution of the Easter Rising – this is the reason why the British authorities then accused the Association of having backed the insurrection. However, the GAA rejected these allegations reiterating its non-political character,[400] and decried the actions of the rebels. Having been blamed for endorsing the 1916 Rising, the Association issued a public statement declaring that the accusations "that the Gaelic Athletic Association had been used in furtherance of the objectives of the Irish Volunteers are as untrue as they are unjust", polemically adding that "all such allegations should, at least, be accompanied by definite proofs". Warning against the tendency to emphasise the connection between the GAA and the Irish Volunteers, William Murphy has observed that "there were countless ordinary members of the GAA, obscure men, who chose the hurley rather than the rifle".[401] At times, the GAA had also impeded the activities of the Volunteers from taking place: for example, when the Association did not allow the use of Croke Park for drilling purposes, because the Volunteers' drill would cut up the pitch.

To sum up, the objectives of the significant numbers of members who embraced weapons in 1916 were not representative of the official position of the GAA at the time, which portrayed itself as neutral: the vast majority of members would have described themselves as constitutional nationalists, who were convinced of the eventual implementation of Home Rule. In the immediate aftermath of the Easter Rising, the GAA was thus on the same wave-length of the vast majority of Irish people who censured the actions of the group led by Patrick Pearse.

Certainly, just as public opinion underwent major shifts eventually turning against the British establishment, so also the Association was forced to revision its own views. After 1916, the GAA moved into closer alignment with the consolidating Sinn Féin separatist front,[402] while its membership became more politically radicalised. Public manifestations of changed political views were not long in coming and the GAA provided the right stage for them. In July, the Tipperary hurlers wore rosettes symbolising their sympathy for the executed fifteen Risers during a match: their action was warmly welcomed by the crowd in the stadium. And, as Richard McElligott has found out mining the documents at the National Archives, British authorities soon observed that a "a discontented and rebellious spirit is

[400] The GAA had already refused to split during the years of intense radicalisation after 1914.
[401] William Murphy, "The GAA during the Irish Revolution, 1913-1923" in Mike Cronin, William Murphy and Paul Rose (eds.), *The Gaelic Athletic Association 1884-2009*, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2009, p. 70.
[402] Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, *The GAA & Revolution in Ireland, 1913-1923*, cit., p. 9.

widespread" among Irish people, a spirit "which frequently comes to the surface at Gaelic Athletic Association".[403]

In brief, the passage from the playfield/pitch to the battlefield was not mathematical. However, what is relevant in the present case is the fact that separatist nationalists presented, to the eyes and imagination of the young readers, the training on the playfield as crucial to their future work in the nationalist ranks. Irish boys were imbued with martial sentiment through leisure activities such as reading periodicals intended for juveniles.

As it is likely to imagine, *Fianna* was in the forefront in promoting physical fitness, to be acquired by playing at the Gaelic games. Physical activity played a pivotal role in the everyday life of Irish Boy Scouts, because, in order to actively contribute to the country's self-determination, they had to be trained physically and mentally, "trained in mind and body to render the service". As seen in Chapter II, the code of membership recurrently emphasises the importance of being "fit", "strong", "trained in body" as well as in mind. The first goal of *Fianna*'s readers had to be the refinement of their practical, military skills. In a mirror-like play, fictional heroes displayed the same skills – to be acquired or perfected by the Irish Boys Scouts – which were to be put to test and use repeatedly. By virtue of an intensive training, thus, Scouts were renowned for their proficiency in the athletic department and their militaristic outlook, as the following song, titled "Fianna", suggests:

> Hark to the tramp of the young guard of Eireann!
> Firm is each footstep and erect is each head;
> Soldiers of Freedom, unfearing and eager
> To follow the teaching of her hero dead.
>
> Chorus.
> On for freedom, Fianna Eireann!
> Set we our faces to the dawning day –
> The day in our own land, when strength and daring
> Shall end forever the Saxon sway.
>
> Strong be our hands, like the Fianna Eireann
> Who won for her glory in the days that are gone;
> Clean be our thinking and truthful our speaking,
> That we may deserve her when the fight is done!
>
> Soldiers and champions of Eireann, our Mother,
> Fear we no Sasanach – his schemes or his steel,
> Foes of the foeman, but comrades and brothers

[403] Richard McElligott, "The GAA, the 1916 Rising and its Aftermath to 1918", in Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (ed.), *The GAA & Revolution in Ireland, 1913-1923*, cit., p. 141.

Of all who are striving for our Eire's weal![404]

The Scouts – the "young guard of Eireann" in the song – are here presented as the spiritual heirs of the dead past heroes who fought for Ireland's freedom as they are asked to follow "the teaching of her hero dead". Analogously, the stories featured in *Fianna* and read by the Irish Boy Scouts seemed to point to a genealogy of patriots that starts with the mythological heroes of the ancient sagas and end us with the Scouts. Generally speaking most nationalists took an explicit interest in constructing a kind of heroic nationalist genealogy ending with the youngest generations. All the Irish youths were expected to follow in the wake of Fionn and Cuchulainn. With regard to the latter, Neasa wrote that "The boy champion of Uladh should be every Irish boy's ideal of chivalry and fidelity and strength and manliness, and the story of Cuchulainn's deeds should be told by every fireside in the land".[405]

Therefore, at St. Enda's, pupils were spurred to become like the heroic Gael sung of in old Irish epics, whose "fighting is always merry and his feasting always sad". The teachers tried to recover what has been lost in the years of British occupation, trying to be nearer to the spirit of ancient heroes by keeping up before themselves "the image of Fionn during his battles – careless and laughing, with that gesture of the head, that gallant smiling gesture, which has been an eternal gesture in Irish history", and Pearse adds, remembering the long line of Irish rebels who had threatened the stability of British rule over Ireland, that the very gesture of Fionn, smiling "was most memorably made by Emmet when he mounted the scaffold in Thomas Street" and "most recently by those Three who died at Manchester".[406]

On the one hand, nationalists looked to Ireland's patriotic and mythical past in order to justify their own claims of independence; they retrieved the legends of Cuchulainn and the Fianna, which were, as Mircea Eliade would put it, "exemplary and consequently repeatable, and thus serves as a model and justification for all human actions".[407] On the other, it must be admitted that the nationalists fully appreciated the strong hold that the stories about past heroes had on the imagination of the Irish youths. Ballads and fictionalised accounts about the lives and deeds of dead heroes were indeed fairly effective in convincing the youngsters that they were part of a long succession of patriots. For instance, when describing his role in the 1919 ambush at Soloheadbeg that started the Anglo-Irish War, Dan Breen is eager to

[404] Marching Song of Na Fianna in Banba's *Signal of Fire*, p. 54. The music of this song was published in the issue of *Irish Freedom* for November 1911.
[405] *Irish Freedom*, June 1913, p. 3.
[406] "By Way of Comment", in *An Macaomh*, Vol. 2, no. 2, May 1913, p. 6.
[407] Quoted in Richard Kearney, "Myth and Terror." The Crane Bag, vol. 2, no. 1/2, 1978, p. 128.

point out that in the very same place "Brian Boru and his brother Mahon fought their first great battle with the Danes in 968, when Brian with his gallant army of Tipperary men and Clare men routed the invaders" so as to show a continuity between his action and those of the nationalist icon Brian Boru.[408]

Likewise, the Scouts introjected the fact of being part of a long line of Irish rebels that cast its roots in the ancient mythological sagas. Their imagination was inflamed by those stories, published in *Fianna*, that were nothing but the legends translated by Standish O'Grady in a concise form. The legends are presented not only as the account of a glorious past, but also as prophecies pointing what Ireland might become if today people took on themselves to fight for their country in the wake of the heroes of the ancient sagas. This is because, as Standish O'Grady himself admitted in "In the Gates of the North":

> The legends give us the imagination of the race, they give us that kind of history which it intends to exhibit, and therefore, whether semi-historical or mythical, are prophetic. They unveil, if obscurely, the ideals and aspirations of the land and race which gave them birth; and so possess a value far beyond that of actual events, and duly recorded deeds.[409]

It would seem that the young members of na Fianna Eireann should have conceived of themselves as the spiritual and political legatees of several older dead generations. The extended genealogy proposed by *Fianna* would have linked the Scouts not only with the Fenian forebears of the preceding century, but also with former Irish patriots such as Emmet and O'Neill, and ultimately with the legendary heroes and deities of mythological Erin, i.e. Oisin, Cuchulainn, and most importantly Fionn MacCuhall and his warrior band, the Fianna. It is essential to recall that it was from this mythological Fianna that the whole Scout movement took its name and "mentorship".[410] This hypothesis about a heroic genealogy of patriots is further corroborated by a passage in the *Fianna Handbook* written by Sir Roger Casement and then partially reprinted in *Fianna*:

> The Fianna of to-day are the third heroic companionship that has borne that famous name. The first Fianna, the Fianna of Fionn, have been dead for nearly two thousand years; a few grey-haired men, the veterans of the second Fianna, are with us, and anybody who has seen and spoken to one of these will carry a great memory with him through life, for there have never been nobler or braver men in Ireland than they, nor any that loved Ireland better; the lads of the third Fianna, the familiar green-shirted bare-kneed young soldiers who have prepared the way for our Irish Volunteers, inherit the

[408] A similar point is made by Aidan Beatty in *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938*, cit., p. 21.
[409] Standish O' Grady, *In the Gates of the North*, preface.
[410] Cf. Richard Kearney, "Myth and Terror", pp. 125-139.

> gallant name and tradition of the ancient Fianna and the mighty purpose of the modern Fenians.[411]

Similarly, an article in *Irish Freedom* entitled "Na Fianna Eireann" harshly attacked "those who think the organisation of little importance because it is made up of boys"; these men and women are blamed because "such people forg[o]t that though one may be too young to be the possessor of that powerful weapon called a vote, nobody is too young to serve his country, and, if necessary, fight for his country". In this appeal to, the commentator reminded his readers that "one of the three Irishmen who shook the British Empire like an earthquake on November 23rd, 1867, was but nineteen, and that Robert Emmet was of a similar age or even younger when he first attracted the attention of the pillars of the Empire". The idea of a genealogy of patriots culminating in the boys of Fianna is then reiterated in a passage, in which the idea of sacrifice is invoked:

> those who have joined the Fianna are following in the footsteps of Emmet and Allen, and even though they have to share the same fate, the sacrifice will not be in vain, for from the blood of patriots spring armed men, or at least determined men, who carry on the old fight till the epitaph of Emmet shall be written. The Fianna have not begun one day too soon to prepare for the final struggle.[412]

And as we shall shortly have occasion to remark, *Fianna* as well as the founders of the Irish Boys Scout Movements entrusted the young generations with building a free country. Their thoughts were underpinned by an optimistic view of history: they believed that the Boy Scouts would have managed to restore the prelapsarian Ireland which existed before British Rule. Inded, in the *Fianna Handbook*, Sir Roger Casement reported the following extract from O'Grady's *In the Gates of the North*, but referred it to the Boys Scouts,

> Our heroic literature is bound to repeat itself in action and within the constraining laws of time and space and the physical world. For that prophecy has been always and will be always fulfilled. The heroes are coming, of that you may be sure; their advent is as certain as time. Listen well and you may hear them, hear their glad talk and their sounding war songs, and the music and thunder of their motion. The heroes are coming; they are on the road.[413]

The "heroes" indeed were coming, insofar as many of the Irish Boy Scouts answered the call. Certainly, *Fianna* was prone to exaggerate the importance of the Boy Scout movement,

[411] Sir Roger Casement, "The Fianna of Fionn", *The Fianna Handbook*, cit., p. 151. See also *Fianna*, April 1915, p. 3.
[412] *Irish Freedom*, December 1910.
[413] Sir Roger Casement quoting Standish O' Grady, *In the Gates of the North*, cit., preface.

either consciously or otherwise, but the members did participate in the crucial events of Ireland's long path to freedom. First of all, when Jeremia O'Donavan Rossa died in the United States in July 1915, it was soon decided that his funeral in Dublin, had to be both a tribute to the revolutionary spirit of the Fenian hero and a demonstration of intent by the new generation born in the years around 1900. Therefore, on the day before the funeral, a company of the Fianna provided a guard of honour for Rossa's body in Dublin City's Hall and four scouts stood at each corner of the coffin, while many members of the organisation joined the function.[414]

In the period between the years 1909 and 1916, the Boy Scout movement evolved steadily into a military body for the training of Irish youths, in a context of increasing militarisation of Irish society. As Damien Lawlor rightly argues, it would be a mistake to think that these boys were unaware of the future they were forcing into existence.[415] In June 1914, for instance, the Irish Boy Scouts took part in the Howth gun running operation under the command of Bulmer Hobson. They also made a direct contribution to the struggle as many ex-members of the Fianna joined the Irish Volunteers, if not under age, or they despatched messages for the officers.

To date, two of Fianna's most famous recruits are Seán McLoughlin and Liam Mellows. The latter, the Fianna organiser who managed to galvanise Ireland's youth into an effective revolutionary force, played a leading role as an Irish Volunteer in the Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War and the civil strife. Others notable figures are Seán Heuston and Con Colbert, whose names figure among those of the fifteen men executed for joining the Easter Rising: the stories of their heroic deeds during the rebellion would be later told alongside those of Fionn and his band of warriors to new members of the Irish Boy Scouts. Indeed, they had earned their title of Fiann, a warrior of Ireland.[416]

The active presence of the Boy Scouts in the crucial events of Irish's conquest of independence also seems to confirm what Joost Augusteijn and Peter Hart had termed "the generational gap" in the Irish Risorgimento.[417] As Kiberd noted, "in societies on the brink of revolution, the relation between fathers and sons is reversed [and] the Irish Risorgimento was, among other things, a revolt by angry sons against discredited fathers".[418] Ireland's

[414] Damian Lawlor, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909 to 1923*, Caoillte Books, Offaly, pp. 39-40.
[415] *Ibid*., p. 62.
[416] Heuston also became a cult hero at least in part because of his youth.
[417] As a kind of evidence, the Free State army's official newspaper was called *An t-Oglách*, the Irish for 'The Youthful Warrior'.
[418] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, cit., p. 380.

youth purported to be the maker of national independence, as declared, in his famous *Mountjoy Gaol Notes*, by former Fianna organizer Liam Mellows when pointing to the youth of Ireland as "the salvation of the country".

And in the late 1910s and early 1920s, many come to regard the Irish youths as successful in their efforts to set a train of actions in movement in the late 1910s and early 1920s that managed to transform Irish life, politics and culture. They were a vanguard of social and political change, the protagonists of the most dramatic upheavals in the country, while representing a new kind of young men.

In his "Youth Culture and the Cork I.R.A." Peter Hart has pinpointed two interesting statements made at the time, which point to the increasing trust people bestowed to the new boy who was supposedly born out of the convulsions of post-Easter Rising Ireland. The first statement is an extract from Mrs William O'Brien's *In Mallon* (1920), in which the authoress ponders over the fact that "youth is asserting itself in this Ireland of ours as it never did within living memory of the oldest inhabitant […] the young have in all their own way in Ireland". And Mrs O'Brien does not conceal her admiration for the young man who has emerged with the rise of cultural and political nationalism in Ireland: indeed, she praises "the type of youth we have got to know of late, determined, steady, with a drill uprightness of bearing" that makes him "a Crusader of modern days". Erskine Childers likewise enlisted the virtues of the young Irish Republicans, calling them "the soul of the new Ireland, taken as a whole the finest young men in the country, possessed with an almost religious enthusiasm for their cause, sober, clean-living, self-respecting".[419]

IV.c Concluding remarks

It should be noted here that the increasing Irish militarism of the turn of the century was also reflective of the contemporary need – felt throughout all Europe – to be martial so as to prove one's manhood.[420] A general concern affecting European youth at the beginning of the twentieth century, which in the distinctive case of Ireland was also engendered by a British input. The emphasis on the Irish "warrior race" with Fionn's band as its progenitors is

[419] Quoted in Peter Hart, "Youth Culture and the Cork I.R.A.", in David Fitzpatrick (ed.). *Revolution? Ireland 1917*-1923, Trinity History Workshop, Dublin, 1990, p. 17. See also Id., *The I.R.A. and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923*, Clarendon Press, New York; Oxford, 1998, p. 165.
[420] See for instance: Eoghan Davis, "The Guerrilla Mind", in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923*, cit., p. 45.

revealing about the nationalists' need for constructing an idealised and stable image of Ireland's male youth. The admirers of Standish O'Grady's works looked to the mythological world of ancient sagas also to rediscover a sense of manhood that in modern Ireland had been eroded by the external pressures, to unveil an image which would serve also as the model for upcoming generations. Joseph Valente describes the nationalists' effort to put forward a new image for and of Ireland's males as an attempt to break free of "the double bind of Irish masculinity", i.e. an attempt to dismantle negative stereotypes portraying Irish males as marred by passive femininity or brutal immaturity.[421] Irish nationalists responded to the implications of feminine or bestialising discourses by placing emphasis on the masculine, athletic and warrior-like elements of the Irish character, while identifying Anglophone culture as the source of corruption and degeneration. These themes are at the centre of the next chapter.

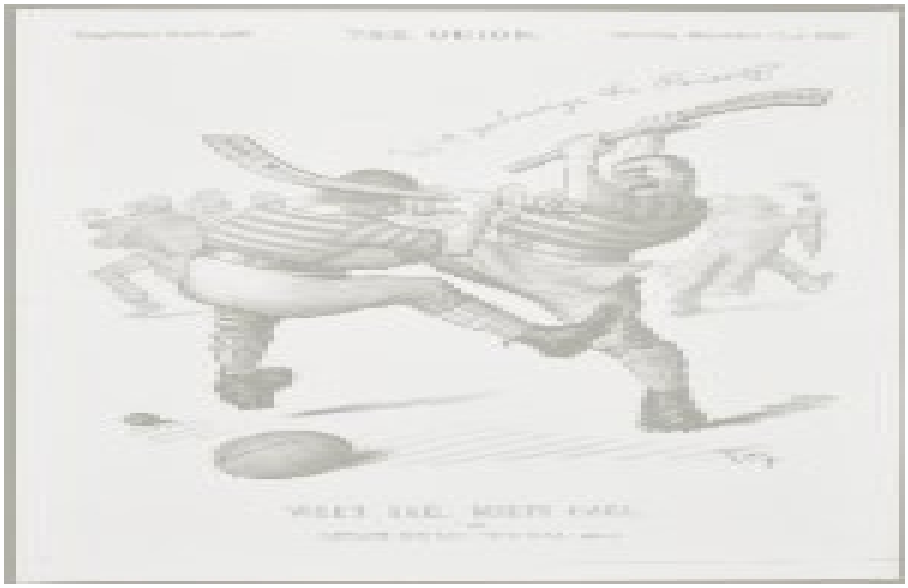

Figure 8 - The cartoon "When Gael meets Gael; or, Home Rule Rehearsed" is attributed to 'Lex' (Richard Thomas Moynan, 1856-1906) and was published in the *Union* on December 10th, 1887. It refers to the annual convention of the Gaelic Athletic Association at Thurles where on 9 November, 1887, a split occurred between "Fenians" and "priests". The image depicts two sportsmen attacking each other: both wield hurling sticks, with the words "Home Rule" and "Separation" respectively written on them. The cartoon concurs to reinforce a view of Irishmen as harbinger of upcoming disaster: the hurling stick, the *camán*, is here used as a weapon so standing out, for English and Unionists, as a vivid reminder of the mortal peril posed by Ireland's nationalists. Another significant feature, moreover, is the simianisation of the separatist player, an aspect which will be discussed in the sub-chapter "Stereotyping the Irish".

[421] Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture,* cit., pp. 1-25.

V

THE ATHLETIC HERO

But what use are camàns?
—Well, you see, we want to raise the physique of the country.
James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (1944)

V.a Stereotyping the Irish

The present section takes a satirical cartoon (Figure 9) as its starting point. This cartoon, published in *Young Ireland*, is worthy of analysis because it bears witness to the cultural construction of the Other, either in Ireland and in Britain, between the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century.

Figure 9 – Cartoon "The Shoneen" by George Monks, published in *Young Ireland*.

At first glance, it is clear how the cartoonist exaggerates certain facial and bodily features of the boy in the foreground, such as the roundness of the face – almost geometrical; the curve of the nose, so uplift as to denote snobbery; the shape of the chin, a far cry from a square jaw; the black suit sloping off its proprietor's shoulders as if it were too big, and the boy's body too slim. Hardly can we gauge the impact of this cartoon on the readers of *Young Ireland*, but is quite safe to assume that its superficial "message" was generally understood by its consuming public. Indeed, the addition of a caption further facilitates the process of identification of the boy with a *shoneen*, even if the bowler hat, the black suit and the white lapdog are important hints suggesting the character's preference of British attitudes, manners, products over their Irish counterparts. This cartoon is, first of all, a caricature of the *shoneen*, i.e. an Irish person who was said to apes the manners and affectations of the English. As previously mentioned, the appellative "*shoneen*", literally translatable as "little John", was a pejorative term for a sycophantic Irish person: the West Briton or *shoneen* slur identified the enemy within, the mongrel whose deprecation often served as an outlet for national resentment against Anglicisation.[422]

However, there are other levels of meaning inscribed in the picture which deserve to be taken into account in the present work and which can be decoded considering the cultural and historical context of the cartoon's production. Comic art of the kind here reproduced, to resort to Lewis Perry Curtis's insightful observations, "involves a reciprocal relationship between those who create it and those who consume it" or, in other words, cartoonists do not work in isolation, but draw on the culture and society that surround them. Therefore their art is, on the one hand, thick with clues to the social and political dynamics of the cartoonist's specific time and culture, and, on the other hand, it is fuelled by the fears, bias and prejudices that already circulate among the artists' audience.[423] Given that, I am deeply convinced that the cartoon by George Monks contains important clues to the cultural political forces at work in Ireland at the turn of the century; in particular, to the anxieties that haunted the minds of the Irish in those days.[424]

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[422] Aidan Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, p. 25.
[423] Lewis Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, cit., pp. x-xi.
[424] I have to acknowledge my debt to the studies of L. Perry Curtis, which constitute the basis of the following section. Although others have built on his work, Curtis's *Anglo-Saxons and Celts. A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (1968) and *Apes and Angels. The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (2nd edition 1997) remain the seminal texts. For further analysis on the representation of the Irish in British culture and about stereotypical notions of Celticism, see for instance: Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999.

The boy's depiction is totally unflattering and placed in stark physiognomic opposition with the group of boys in the background – boys who are playing hurling, the most authentic Irish game. The cartoon might be productively interpreted as a diptych, whereby the childlike and diminutive figure of the *shoneen* physiognomically contrasts with the harmonious and well-formed bodies of the young hurling players in the background. Arguably, the former's flabby attire – besides denoting a preference for British fashion over a truly Irish-made one – mirrors underdeveloped muscles, an effeminate and weak body. The hybridity of the young *shoneen* also functions here as a convenient counterfoil for imagining the ideal of Irish youthful body. The cartoon, in fact, is not only a depreciation of the *shoneen*, but is also reflective of the Irish nationalists' endeavours to purge their own image of any feminine or childlike element. And at a subtler level, it displayed that political sovereignty was crucially interconnected with healthy bodily normality.

There is a relation between the strong, robust, harmonious bodies of the boys in the background and the apprehensions of many Irish nationalists about the possible physical degeneration of boys and men at the time. Ideas on physical fitness, notions on manliness as interconnected to patriotism, were under constant revision between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Anxieties about the decline of manhood were common across Europe and they kept surfacing in the social and political discourses of the time. In Britain, anxieties about the degeneration of manhood recurred frequently across a range of social and political discourses at this time.[425] Yet as Sisson summed up, Irish nationalism had reasons of its own to be more anxious than most about a possible decline in manhood[426] and to understand the peculiarity of Irish nationalists' fears is necessary to place them in the broader frame of the discourse of Imperialism and, with regard to the interconnected feminisation of Irishmen, of Celticism.

At the turn of the century, the Irish people were spurred to assert a dignified self-image in opposition to a whole gamut of discourses that categorised them as, at various times, barbarian, ape, effeminate, immature, but always inferior and defective. The British

[425] Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots*, cit., p. 9. The concerns of Irish nationalists can be productively placed in a transnational broader context, because anxieties about human degenerations were widespread throughout all Europe. For instance, Baden-Powell's 'Boy Scouts' movement, emerged in late nineteenth-century English also to dispel anxieties of national degeneracy concerning British youth and ultimately prevent the fall of the British Empire. Moreover, the fear that the British race could degenerate intensified after the first South African War and was investigated by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. The committee was indeed established after a widely-reported scandal over the abysmal physical conditions of potential recruits. For a discussion on degeneration as an European, rather than exclusively Irish fear, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration a European Disorder, 1848-1918*, Cambridge; New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989.
[426] Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots*, cit., p. 9.

had implemented, on the one hand, the feminising discourse of Celticism, and, on the other, in the wake of Darwin's *On the Origins of Species* (1859), the bestialising discourse of siminianisation, which cooperated in representing the Irish as racially deficient in manhood and so unfit for political/legislative independence. At times, the charge of infantilization was also used to justify the imperial mission.

According to John Gillingham, the vision of the Irish as ignoble savages originated in the attitudes and writings of medieval Englishmen; he has convincingly argued that one should look to the Ireland of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries if wishing to uncover the origins of the English imperialist and stereotyping attitudes to the Irish.[427] Indeed, discourses that portrayed the Irish as a cultural and racial 'Other' have existed since the Normans' invasion of the twelfth century, when Giraldus (or Geraldus) Cambrensis provided King Henry II with a wholly unflattering portrayal of the Irish. In an oft-quoted passage, the author plays on the Latin word meaning 'barbarian' to describe the Irish people, who are "Gens igitur haec gens barbara, et vere barbara. Quia non tantum barbaro vestium ritu, verum etiam comis et barbis luxuriantibus, juxta modernas novitates, incultissima; et omnes eorum mores barbarissimi sunt".[428] Repeatedly describing the Irish as barbarous murderers and thieves in *The Topography of Ireland* (1187) and *The Conquest of Ireland* (1189), Giraldus Cambrensis lay the foundations of what would become the British standard view of Irish people as his works still circulated in both Latin and English in the seventeenth century.[429] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, indeed, images of the Irish as a savage and barbarous people were reiterated by Edmund Spenser and Fynes Moryson in their writings.

More importantly, later authors retrieved from the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis the notion that since the Irish were barbarians, their dispossession was legitimated. The bestialisation of the Irish underlay assumptions about the unfitness of the native Irish to govern themselves: the discourse about Irish barbarity ultimately served to justify imperialist expansion and colonial rule. As Gillingham observed, moreover, the syllogism embedded in Giraldus Cambrensis' words was made explicit and conducive to military action in bull *Laudabiliter* (1155) by which Pope Hadrian IV granted Ireland to Henry II "to the end that

[427] John Gillingham, *Images of Ireland 1170-1600: The Origins of English Imperialism*, vol. 37, History Today Ltd, London, 1987, p. 16 and 22. See also Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650*, Oxford University Press, New York; Oxford, 2001.
[428] Quoted in Joseph T. Leersen, *Mere Irish and fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development, and Literary Expression Prior to the Nineteenth Century*. vol. 3., Cork University Press in association with Field Day, Cork, 1996, p. 37.
[429] Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy. Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2004, p. 5.

the foul customs of that country may be abolished and the barbarous nation, Christian in name only, may through your care assume the beauty of good morals".[430] However, at the time of Girladus Cambrensis Ireland's conquest was not the top priority of the King and the complete dispossession of the Irish was not carried out. Ireland, instead, slumbered into a state of acute political fragmentation as the medieval colonisation of the country mainly consisted in the displacement of indigenous rulers by Anglo-Norman aristocrats. Their partial and gradual settlement was also frequently undermined by outbreaks of plague and was only loosely supervised by the English Crown.

Only in the late medieval period, the English monarchy could claim a long-established sovereignty over Ireland, and great part of the country as well as most of the major towns were ruled by English conceptions of lordship, language and law. Between then and the early seventeenth century, colonial expansion became increasingly interwoven with religious conflict, as the Protestant Reformation gained in England but not in the staunchly Catholic Ireland.[431] Some of these shifts were mirrored in the British writings of the time, which recorded also a different approach to Ireland's indigenous population. If the barbarian Irish portrayed by Geraldus of Wales were not irremediably inferior to the Anglo-Normans, for the extension of the Christian faith and the Angevin temporal power could have redeemed them – the papal bull stated that through British royal and Christian care Ireland could "assume the beauty of good morals" – in sixteenth century writings the Irish could be brought into civility by the uprooting of their culture.[432]

The image of the barbarous Irish gained prominence with Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596). Staged as a dialogue between an Englishman of moderate opinions, Eudoxus, and the Irish colonist Irenius, Spenser's texts has been considered as a blueprint for the military subjugation and 'Englishing' of Ireland due to its effort to demonstrate the need for early modern settlers to anglicise the natives before the opposite process took place: hence the appeal for making the Gaels forget about their "Irishe nation" because, if they remembered their pre-occupation society, they would resist the British usurpers' plans.[433] A more evident racial edge, instead, emerges in the defamatory remarks about Gaelic customs as barbarous "Scotes or Scythian" remnants that serve to highlight the unbridgeable gulf between the barbarity of the Gaels and the civilization of the

[430] John Gillingham, *Images of Ireland 1170-1600*, cit., p. 19.
[431] Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire. Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture*, cit., p. 21.
[432] David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland*, cit., p. 4.
[433] Laura O'Connor, *Haunted English: The Celtic Fringe, the British Empire, and De-Anglicization*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2006, pp. xv and 3.

English. For instance, indigenous Irish women were denigrated to the point of being accused of suckling the blood of their enemies. As the only possible solution for keeping Ireland as a colony Spenser advocated the erasure of Irish culture through Anglicisation. Meanwhile, he warned against the consequences of a possible miscegenation. Spenser's Irenius fears the settlers' co-mingling with the indigenous women as the intermingling of the two peoples would not result in the advancement of British civilisation: miscegenation, cultural and racial, would end in its destruction.[434]

The barbarity of indigenous people served as a model of alterity to pin down the uniqueness and superiority of the English race. David Cairns and Shaun Richards have taken recourse to Foucault's disquisition on classical episteme, the prevalent mode of acquiring knowledge emerging with the sixteenth century, to explain the purport of English writing on Ireland. Foucault has argued that after the acquisition of knowledge within the framework of classical episteme was based upon the acknowledgment of difference as the activity of the mind no longer consisted "in drawing things together, in setting out on a quest for everything that might reveal some sort of kinship, attraction, or secretly shared nature within them" – as was the case in pre-classical episteme – "but, on the contrary, in discriminating, that is establishing their identities"; in this sense, "discrimination imposes upon comparison the primary and fundamental investigation of difference". Applying Foucault's notion of classical episteme in their own examination, Cairns and Richards thus state that, in the case of later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, English writing about Ireland and its inhabitants has to be regarded not only as a means of broadening knowledge of the neighbouring island and its people – a necessary knowledge underlying colonial expansion – but also as a touchstone to define the qualities of 'Englishness', by simultaneously defining 'not-Englishness' or 'Otherness'.[435]

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[434] Noonan offers a more nuanced view on Spenser's opinion, attributing to Sir Temple's *The Irish Rebellion* the most destructive and long-lasting effects on English perception of the Irish. Temple's work offered not just an interpretation of the 1641 uprising but a portrait of the two peoples, English and Irish, as basically and permanently incompatible-a thesis that has had remarkable staying power. Published in 1646, Temple's work was a departure from the Tudor and early Stuart canon on Ireland. While Temple borrowed much from earlier commentators such as Edmund Spenser and Sir John Davies, his analysis differed from them and set out in a new direction by defining the Irish as ethnically distinct. Noonan, Kathleen M. "'Martyrs in Flames': Sir John Temple and the Conception of the Irish in English Martyrologies." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2004, pp. 223-255 (224).

[435] David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland*, cit., p. 2. The quotation from Michel Foucault is reported from Id., *The Order of Things*, Tavistock Press, London, 1970, p. 55. Interestingly, Cairns and Richards's insights are in line with those expressed by Linda Colley in *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (1992), which put forward that idea that Britons defined their identity through comparison and contrast with the 'Other', i.e. British people classified who they were by whom they were not. In particular, Colley's placed emphasis on the claim that the British came to see themselves as such "not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores". To be fair, Colley's assumptions

Analogous observations were voiced by Declan Kiberd, who noted that "in a binary way, the structural elements of British 'civilisation' could be defined by an encounter with its antithesis – barbarism." Therefore, Ireland was soon labelled as not-England, a place whose peoples were "the very antitheses of their new rulers from overseas": from the later sixteenth century, when Edmund Spenser wrote *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, the English have presented themselves to the world as controlled, refined and rooted; and so it suited them to find the Irish hot-headed, rude and nomadic, the perfect foil to set off their own virtues'.[436]

This type of stereotyping did not end in the Early Modern Age. In his own inquiry of the role of ethnic prejudice in Anglo-Irish relations titled *Anglo-Saxons and Celts* (1968), L. Perry Curtis was the first to argue that many respectable intellectuals of the Romantic Age as well as many Victorians believed in an unbridgeable biological divide between the Anglo-Saxon "Us" and a Celtic or Gaelic "Them", which was recast and reiterated also at the religious level, with Protestantism opposed to Roman Catholicism. More specifically, according to Curtis, they were persuaded that cultural and behavioural differences between them and the Irish were originated in a hereditary – or racial – difference: the numerous cartoons of Irish rebels with ape-like faces, limbs and bodies provide evidence of the widely-accepted assumption about the physical inferiority of the native Irish in the eyes of the English. Indeed, the notion of a racial asymmetry kept surfacing in the writing of eminent and educated Victorians like William Stubbs, John Kemble and Charles Kingsley, who regarded the Catholic Irish as alien in race and inferior in culture to the Anglo-Saxons.

Kingsley, describing to his wife the miserable wretches he saw walking by the roadside, stated: "I don't believe that they are our fault. I believe there are not only more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except when tanned by exposure, are as white as ours".[437]

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have not been uncontested, but her *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* is still recognised as seminal works in the study of the construction of British identity. See, for instance, Stephen Haseler, *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation and Europe*, Macmillan, London, 1996 and Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood (eds.). *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, c. 1750-c. 1850*. Manchester University Press, 1997.

[436] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, cit., p. 9.

[437] *Charles Kingsley. His Letters and Memoirs of His Life, edited by his wife*, vol. ii, London, 1882, p. 107. Kingsley provided us also with a good example of fictive ethnology in *Hereward the Wake*, in which he wrote of the Irish: "ill-armed and almost naked, they were as perfect in the arts of forest warfare as those Maories whom the so much resembled". The passage reveals the typical Victorian penchant for taxonomies, here transferred from the study of exotic flora and fauna to that of humankind: human beings who were scrutinised, judged against the touchstone of the British paradigm.

Likewise, S.T. Coleridge's journalistic writings on English policy in Ireland likewise retain many of his predecessors' insights, for he comments upon the lack of civilisation of its population – "the least civilised of Christian Europe" – and their propensity to obey "powers not constituted or acknowledged by the laws and Government, and of course with as much greater devotion as conscience is mightier than law".[438]

Yet, to this kind of stereotypes that dated back to the twelfth century, the Victorians added the feminization of the Irish. The discourse of Celticism provides us with a clue about the reasons underlying the portrayal of Irishness as feminine since the mid-nineteenth century. In the wake of Seamus Deane's studies on Matthew Arnold's theories,[439] my attention is devoted to the word 'Celtic', particularly as it came to be used in Victorian England, when the author of *Culture* charged it with a political resonance bound – in later discourses – to highlight a supposed racial difference between the people of Ireland and England. In 1867, the year of the unsuccessful Fenian rising, Arnold published *The Study of Celtic Literature*,[440] which drew heavily on his own series of Oxford lectures, delivered in 1865 in his capacity as professor of poetry. Both the lectures and the essay placed emphasis on the importance of a disinterested study of Celtic literature, depicted as the vehicle to help to transform the complex Anglo-Celtic relationship in a fruitful interracial symbiosis.[441]

In this influential work, Arnold suggested that the Celt could supply to England what its middle classes lacked and vice versa. The dreamy, imaginative, ineffectual and primitive quality of Celtic nature could balance the prosaic, materialistic, progressive element that defined Anglo-Saxon nature. Both the Irish and the English character were a compound of attractive and repulsive qualities:

> The Celt, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature, but out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader, that is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits, but retaining an inalienable part of freedom and

[438] For an in-depth analysis of S.T. Coleridge's comments on Ireland and the rise of a new patriotism associated to the United Irishmen, see: Deane, Seamus, *Civilians and Barbarians*, Field Day, Belfast, 1983, pp. 6-8.
[439] *The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies*
[440] Arnold would frequently return on Irish questions in later years. In 1878 he contributed the essay "Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism" to the *Fortnightly Review* edited by John Morley, while, in 1882, he published a volume entitled *Irish Essays*. In the case of *The Study of Celtic Literature*, however, Arnold's interest in the cultural relationship between the English and the Celts was kindled by his reading of Renan's 1854 essay *La Poésie des races celtiques* in the original French, on which he drew heavily for the composition of his own. For instance, Arnold's argument on the complementarity between the Celts and the English has an equivalent in Renan's thesis that nations were formed by mutually complementary races as in the case of French and creative Celts in France.
[441] Laura O'Connor, *Haunted English: The Celtic Fringe, the British Empire, and De-Anglicization*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2006, p. xv.

> self-dependence; but it is a temperament for which one has a kind of sympathy notwithstanding.

Arnold did "no doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret".

According to Arnold, the "Titanic" element in Celtic Literature was the sentiment which fuelled the peculiar genius of the Celts. This statement echoed those already expressed by Renan who, combining praise and deprecation, had asserted that Celts were intoxicated with supernal beauty and an "invincible need of illusion" which, on the one hand, alienate them from the "cheerful but commonplace" lives of their neighbours, but, on the other hand, make them fundamentally incapable of adapting to the compromise of realpolitik.[442] Victorians thus attributed to the Irish all those emotions and impulses which a harsh mercantile code had led them to suppress in themselves. Whereas John Bull was industrious and reliable, Paddy was held to be indolent and contrary; if the former was mature and rational, the latter must be unstable and emotional; if the English were manly, the Irish must be feminine.[443] And the embryonic prejudicial element in Arnold's discourse was later employed in counter-nationalist arguments during the Home Rule debates at the turn of the century in Ireland.

Besides effeminacy, other discourses prevailing in Victorian and Edwardian Britain served to highlight that Irish nationalism contained no legitimate goals, mirroring instead the unchecked urges of an immature people. In *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*, Curtis observes that "one of the favourite ascriptions of Englishmen and women about the Irish concerned their childlike qualities" as, in their view, children needed guidance and firm hand, which only British rule could guarantee. Curtis also supplies a good example of this anti-Irish stereotype by reporting the impressions of Edith Balfour of her week's tour in the west of Ireland. Balfour, the wife of Alfred Lyttleton, wrote a revealing document in which the supposed immaturity of the Irish is fully exposed as a justification to Ireland's subservient position; here, presumably with an unwanted effect, the hypocrisy underlying the passage is enhanced rather than mitigated by the choice of the author to represent herself as a ministering lady, taking care of the Irish 'children':

[442] Quoted in Laura O'Connor, *Haunted English*, cit., p. 19.
[443] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, cit., p. 30.

> They [The Irish] are like children still listening to old fairy stories while their bread has to be earned; they are like children who are afraid to walk alone, who play with fire, who are helpless; like children who will not grow up. But, like children too, and they appeal to the love and the pity of all who come in contact with them. What would I not give… to help them? But the task is very difficult, and if you give children freedom they will certainly stray.[444]

Clearly, the Irish had to come to terms with these stereotypes, which labelled them as childish, feminine or incapable to check their urges. By the end of the nineteenth century, as the end of the Land League struggle brought quieter times, the dehumanising portraits of Irish people gradually fell out of fashion;[445] but for too a long period the images of the defective bodies of Irish males – too feminine, too immature, or ape-like – had proliferated so that the stereotype had stamped itself as indelible on the minds of the English and Irish readerships alike. What is relevant in the present study is how these stereotypes affected Irish nationalist in the construction of an ideal of boyhood – built around the figure of the Gaelic athlete – which was then propagated by the periodicals intended for juveniles.

V.b The Ideal Boy

The Irish obviously resented the stereotypes concocted by the English. But at the same time they had fully introjected it. For instance, George Monks, the creator of the cartoon "The Shoneen", is certainly not oblivious to the negative stereotypes created by British rule, namely that they Irish were a childlike or effeminate people – the boy in the foreground stands out as the graphic emblem of just how far the young Irish man could degenerate into childishness and effeminacy;[446] yet, at the same time, he hurled these thrust of biases and prejudices against Ireland's oppressor. The cartoon reverses the stereotypical images about the Irish in a direct manner. Wiping the slate clean, Monks attributed female and infantile characteristics to those adopting imported manners, the *shoneens*.

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[444] "A Week in the West of Ireland," *National Review*, 46, September 1905, 271, p. 77. Reprinted in Perry, p. 53.

[445] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 15

[446] As sort of further evidence of the power of these stereotypical images, it is worth mentioning, among many others, the short story "The Cousins" published by *St. Enda's* in February 1923, in which national/racial stereotypes abound. In "The Cousins", the two cousins of the title – one Irish and the other English – discuss about Ireland's lot after the conclusion of the Great War: the former is described (unfairly) by his English relative as "hot-headed, aggressive" and "always fighting" – an exemplum of the animalistic nature of the Irish. Curiously, in this tale, also stereotypes about the British are reported: not unlike his compatriots, the other cousin is pleasure-seeker and prone to betting. *St. Enda's*, February 1923, pp. 3-4.

The cartoon thus exemplifies a kind of "negative response", which results in the action of hurling back to the British – or to those Irish mimicking the British – the stereotypes attributed to Ireland's people. This was a common pattern in the story papers here examined. An example of this kind of reaction may be found in Mrs Margaret T. Tender's serialised story *The Child-Stealers. A Tale of the Days of Cromwell*, published in *Our Boys* throughout the year 1917. Mrs Pender was considerably popular in her own days, and mainly noted for tales and novels with a historical setting, such as *The Adventures of the White Arrow* about a band of boys linked to Owen Roe and, indeed, *The Child-Stealers*, which recounts an oft-debated episode in Irish history – the transportation of Irish people to British territories in the Caribbean to work there as indentured servitude, under the English republic of Oliver Cromwell.[447] Apart from the didactic and polemical intent to familiarise the young readers of *Our Boys* with another atrocity committed by the British usurpers, the serialised story is noteworthy for another reason as well, i.e. the depiction of the Britons as opposed to the that of the Irish. Indeed, the British child-stealers – two men in charge with taking Irish children between the ages of 10 and 14 from their parents to sell them as slaves in the West Indies – are described as "one lean and crabbed and crooked, the other stout and fat, but surly and ill-looking". In contrast, Neil, the story's Irish hero who will defeat the two kidnappers, moves as a "trained athlete […] with lighting speed, with all the trained strength of the young athlete".[448] Thus, the defective body is British rather than Irish.

In this regard, returning to Monks' cartoon, another consideration should be made. When readers of *Young Ireland* looked at this illustration, they saw both the responsible for Irish physical degeneration and its antidote – Anglicisation and mimicry as opposed to the practice of Gaelic games. On the one hand, it is here embedded the suggestion that Gaelic athletes had to be perceived as manlier, less effeminised and infantilised, than those who did not play the same games. The cartoonist, presumably in a conscious way, referred to a kind of widespread negative propaganda propagated by the "supporters of Gaelic games" at the beginning of the twentieth century, who "often connected images of British men with those of women or neutered men."[449] By attributing the defective body to the British, they were trying to persuade their compatriots that the English were weak or feminine, and therefore, incapable to rule over another country. Basically, they were reversing the discourses

[447] Nowadays, harsh debates rage over the idea whether the indentured servitude of the Irish in the Caribbean was essentially an extension of the transatlantic slave trade. For more information see *The Curious Origins of the 'Irish Slaves' Myth*, Public Radio International, Minneapolis, 2017; Sean O'Callaghan, *To Hell Or Barbados: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ireland*, Brandon, Dingle, 2001.
[448] *Our Boys*, October 1917, pp. 38-40.
[449] Patrick McDevitt, *"May the Best Man Win"*, cit., p. 21.

employed by the British to justify their domination, which indeed relied on discourses of Irish inferiority and their inability to govern themselves.

On the other hand, the portrayal of the Irish playing the traditional games as manly, neither childish nor effeminate, also points to a kind of "positive rhetoric", which was not based on the depreciation of the British. What the nationalists clearly realised was that organised games could function as a regulatory regime that created normative modes of masculinity. This aspect was understood by the contributors to the story papers as well. Against the accusation of barbarism, effeminacy and immaturity, indeed, they put forward an ideal of boyhood that revolved around the figure of a Gaelic athlete – a sportsman who, besides boasting physical prowess, was also committed to Ireland's prosperity. An ideal, it is worth nothing, that was conditioned and shaped by the stereotypical representations formulated by the British.

Since their inception, the periodical papers here examined devoted themselves to forging the character of their young readers according to specific sanctioned lines. As shown in the Chapter II, they strategized to ensure the "informal"[450] character training of boys was carried out, by publishing articles and stories about young men whose characterisations reveal the authors' efforts to counter the noxious British influences and stereotypes. Lessons were imparted within the fictional element, but were made manifest by their location next to non-fictional moral mentorship, insofar as the non-fiction and advice columns of periodicals lent weight and precision to the morals hidden in the fictional accounts and in the illustrations. In fact, one of the aims of the non-fictional elements was to ensure that the young readers understood what lessons to draw from their reading. Forging was therefore not reducible to a specific story, but was formed from a general and long-running appreciation of the whole complex of narratives by the reader. Analogously, by juxtaposing the various narrative forms and considering them as a whole, also today's readers may understand clearly the lessons imparted in the fictional account and come to the conclusion that these papers endeavoured to entertain their readership, but above all, to shape boys in a period of rapid change.

In particular, the papers lingered on a vision of sober and clean-limbed youth. The ideal boy displayed the desirable and desired qualities of self-discipline, bravery, physical prowess and patriotic commitment to Ireland's cause. These skills formed the base

[450] By "informal" character training I mean the kind of character forging which took place outside the school and the home. Indeed, normative notions of masculinity were inculcated not only through formal education and training in the home, but also through reading and leisure activities.

understanding of the Irish male ideal, and, as John Tosh puts it, "it was the consistent aim of boys' education to internalise these moral qualities – to make them second nature so that they could be expressed in action instinctively and convincingly".[451]

Importantly, all of these qualities were not inborn but could be acquired by training both mind and body on the playfields of hurling and football. As clear from the papers, the nationalists' support for Gaelic games throughout the twentieth century was closely related to the physical and mental virtues they were believed to "teach" to athletes. Indeed, the lessons imparted on the playfields were thought to promote the importance of physical strength, individual control, religious consciousness, military preparedness. Interestingly, there is a term which encompasses all the traits discussed in this and in the previous paragraphs – i.e. "manliness".[452] The term manliness refers to what was needed of Irish boys as they were growing up: it is a relevant category for analysing what was expected of a broad range of boys in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland.

And, as said before, manliness could be developed on playfields. With regard to the English sport system, George Mosse has hypothesised that "team sport was regarded as education in manliness" in England, and that "between 1850 and 1880 organized sport gradually took over all training in manliness".[453] This statement may be easily paraphrased so as to describe the Irish context: there, Gaelic games were extolled as an effective training in manliness.[454]

Particularly illustrative is a message sent by the Bishop of Cashel, Dr Harty, to *Our Boys*: "Hurling was one of the most manly, most ancient, and most graceful game the world knows. It was Irish and helped to foster an Irish and manly spirit – the spirit which was so

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[451] John Tosh, "The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750-1850," in *English Masculinities 1600-1800*, edited by Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen, London, Longman, 1999, p. 23.

[452] In the same line, Michael Flanagan noted that the conventions of masculinity which perhaps most distinguished the period relevant to this thesis are those of "manliness". See Michael Flanagan, *True Sons of Erin*, cit., p. 110.

[453] George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 46.

[454] Sporting practice in general was valued and appreciated for its educational qualities, but no foreign sport was deemed as effective as the Gaelic games. For the positive value ascribed to sporting practice *per se*, see the following article, significantly entitled "The Value of Sport". It is about great men who praised sport and practised it during their life: "It is said that the Duke of Wellington, when once looking on at the boys engaged in their sports at the playgrounds at Eton, where he had spent many of his own younger days, made the remark, 'It was there that the battle of Waterloo was won!'. […] Though Sir Walter Scott when at Edinburgh College, went by the name of 'The Green Blockhead,' he was, notwithstanding his lameness, a remarkably healthy youth; he could spear a salmon with the best fisher on the Tweed, and ride a wild horse with any hunter in Yarrow. The famous Burns, when a youth, was remarkable chiefly for his leaping, putting, and wrestling. Professor Wilson was a great athlete, as great at throwing the hammer as in his flights of eloquence and poetry." See *Our Boys*, July 1917, p. 296.

essential today".[455] The notion of the Gaelic games as manly and fostering a manly spirit was also reiterated in another message to *Our Boys*, this time by the Reverend J.B. Dollard. According to the Reverend, for the Irish boy,

> in his moments of leisure and recreation there is no better or nobler way for him to refresh his body and mind than the manly games furnished by the Gaelic Athletic Association, especially the national game of hurling [because it developed those] qualities that he will find useful in the struggle for existence at all times.[456]

From these extracts, it is clear how the term "manliness" had a cultural resonance which is difficult to ignore in publications for boys. Nor can the close interrelationship between Gaelic games and the nationalists' manly ideal be neglected.

Conceived as instrumental to the forging Irish manly boys, Gaelic games became associated with an idealised form of masculinity, which was often structured around mythical exempla of athletes. The world of the Gaelic Sagas and, in particular, the adventures of the boy-hero Cuchulainn and the Boy Corps of the Red Branch – which competed with the British Arthurian cycles – presented nationalists with a symbolic antidote to English stereotypes. A seminal narrative reinvigorated in the final years of the nineteenth century was that of Cuhulainn, a hero presented as an outstanding hurling player, whose first weapons were little more than a *camán* and a *sliotar*.

Almost retrieved by oblivion by Standish O'Grady's *History of Ireland* (1880), Cuchulainn became a central symbol of strength and masculinity in contemporary Ireland, an inspirational model further associated with the playing of hurling. O'Grady concocted images of such vividness that would stir the imagination of the Rising generation and of the following one. Also Yeats and Lady Gregory were partial to his enthusiasm for ancient Ireland.

In fact, O'Grady's tales became so popular that *Our Boys*, since its very first number, featured a long serial titled *The Story of Cuchulainn. The Boy-Hero of Ancient Ireland*. In the first instalment, Setanta – Cuchulainn's original name – is depicted as a young boy, who embarks on his first adventure with "nothing with him but his hurling stick" and "a silver ball." These would later save the boy's life. As he arrives at Culain's house, Setanta is nearly killed by his massive guard dog. The boy manages to survive only thanks to his ability with the hurling bat: Setanta hurls the ball into the dog's throat killing him. Later on, Setanta is said to feel

[455] *Our Boys*, June 1918, p. 247.
[456] *Our Boys*, December 1917, p. 73.

> that he had that within him which would enable him to rival and excel the youths in the games of skill and feats of strength which they exercised on their playing green in front of the royal palace; for he too could wield the hurley, cast the javelin and spear, wrestle and outstrip his compeers in the foot race.[457]

In this cycle of tales, Cuchulainn and the Red Branch are usually caught in the act of playing hurling, throwing the javelin, or running. For instance, the reader first comes across the member of the Red Branch in a scene in which the heroes are seen while playing hurling: "the healthy faces of the boys all aglow with the exhilarating exercise; their long hair floating in the breeze, bound round the temples with bright coloured bands of silk on which were strung cup shaped ornaments of gold…".[458] In general, the stories based on the saga of Cuchulainn convey – and linger on – the image of a vigorous male body shaped by sporting practice, as exemplified also by the illustration depicting Cuchulainn (Figure 10) which accompanied each instalment of the serial *The Story of Cuchulainn. The Boy-Hero of Ancient Ireland*. Here, the boy-hero stands out for his imposing figure – the drawing was nonetheless meant to grasp the attention of the young readership, and hopefully prompt an emulating effect. Hurling and the practice of native pastimes were put forward as an effective means to develop a fit, healthy, body, something that befitted the ancient heroes – the inspirational models – and twentieth-century Irish boys in equal measure.

Figure 10 – The illustration depicting Cuchulainn in a long-running serial on the boy-hero.

[457] *Our Boys*, September 1914, pp. 22-23.
[458] *Our Boys*, September 1914, p. 23.

In the stories featured in the juvenile papers, the legendary heroes are not the only ones who boast outstanding athletic skills. Shortly after its inception, in January 1915, the monthly *Our Boys* featured a story entitled "Paud O'Donoghue". The eponymous hero is the son of a blacksmith who participated in the Irish Rebellion of 1798 at the side of the Society of the United Irishmen. His description draws heavily on the familiar heroic iconography of the Gaelic sagas. Paud possesses outstanding athletic skills, as

> he was a stout, well-built boy, firmly knit together, with sinewy arms and hands hard as iron. His face, though pale, was handsome and hair that was naturally curled and black as a raven's wing…Among the boys of his county he was an easy first as an athlete. He could jump a wall four foot high with his hands in his pockets and in running he was a match for the red deer of Killarney.[459]

Paud's beautiful, healthy, and vigorous Irish male body, as described in the abovementioned extract ("he was a stout, well-built boy, firmly knit together, with sinewy arms and hands hard as iron"), seems to purposely be made to counteract the stereotypical characterizations of the Irish as either simian, effeminate or childlike inferiors in need of Anglo-Saxon domination. Puad joins in the league of the legendary heroes also because he defies the forces of oppression, battling against seemingly overwhelming odds to live and fight another day.

The message promoting sporting practice was sometimes couched within non-fictional pieces as well, which reported real sporting feats actually taking place in twentieth century Ireland. Evidence of this assumption is contained in an article detailing the career of William Real:

> a simple pleasant athlete, whose name is almost unknown outside the borders of his native district. Yet the life of such a man, great in one sphere and admirable in many phases, can be as edifying as that of a world-conqueror in another. Real, of Pallasgreen, had not alone athletic merit of a supreme order; he also possessed qualities for which we have no measure except words.

Real was endowed with "vigour and fire which has given us many superb athletes and a splendid race of hurlers to the age-old presence of a hardy, adventuring race who mingled in the blood of the native Gael a tonic infusion which strengthened without transforming the qualities and ideals of the older communities".[460] Bombarded with images of sporting feats and descriptions of athletes in laudatory terms, the readers of *Our Boys* were easily made to

[459] *Our Boys*, January 1915.
[460] *Our Boys*, 18 August 1927, p. 868.

associate positive connotations to sporting practice. Moreover, by putting the factual reference to William Real, the boys were also offered with a more relatable example.

In brief, a survey of the periodicals help to demonstrate that the widespread support and participation in Gaelic games can be interpreted also as the attempt to put forward a different image of the Irish boy of which the nationalist community could be proud – a boy like the fictional Paud or William Real. Updated and revised, hurling and Gaelic football produced an image of Irish masculinity that undermined the myth of the effeminate, child-like Celt – the Celt who possessed a defective body – which was so widespread in the nineteenth century.

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The physical prowess and vigour enhanced by the sporting practice were duly celebrated by the Irish periodicals. Yet the focus on strength and physical vigour did not dominate all the discourses related to the relevance of the Gaelic games in the upbringing of Irish youths, as emphasis on individual improvement, self-discipline and commitment to the cause were also paramount. In addition to the external attributes of strength and vigour – splendidly displayed by the heroes of the Gaelic sagas – the ideal Irish boy had to possess certain moral qualities as well. In order to understand that, it is here worth reminding what Joseph Valente described as the internal contradiction, set by the British, of the Irish; it was in a condition of "double bind" that the Irish found themselves in:

> On one side, the British elite could deny the Irish their collective manhood for failing to meet the fundamental standard of virile masculinity, that is, for being insufficiently courageous, powerful, and unyielding in their resistance to colonial rule; on the other side, the British elite could deny the Irish their collective manhood for exceeding the fundamental standard of virile masculinity, that is, for being excessively violent and refractory in their resistance to colonial rule.[461]

This internal contradiction, fuelled by the historic and asymmetric relationship of Ireland with England, inflected the imagining and re-imagining of the ideal of male youth. It even affected the representation of Cuchulainn in the tales by O'Grady and his epigones.

As previously mentioned, English stereotypes current in O'Grady's time attributed to the Irish a love of violence, a readiness to fight, a tendency to be easily angered, a love of

[461] Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture,* cit., p. 25.

battle, and violent passions that lead to unprovoked attacks. All these qualities were viewed as reasons that the Irish could not be self-governing, with Irish emotionalism being regarded as the main counter-indication.[462] O'Grady was not oblivious to such stereotypes: not surprisingly, therefore, in his narrative, he omitted all those episodes in the Cuchulainn's sagas that could be read "as confirmation and glorification of these negative images" used to strengthen British rule.[463] O'Grady's purged his texts of the episodes of unjustified violence or battle-frenzy in which Cuchulainn is not able to control his own instincts. These episodes would have confirmed the so-called "blind hysterics of the Celt", i.e. the "colonial discourse about the wildness and lack of civilization of Ireland, a discourse that was used to justify English imperialism".[464] Consequentially, also *Our Boys* decided to apply a selective censorship to the serial *The Story of Cuchulainn. The Boy-Hero of Ancient Ireland*: the Christian Brothers' Cuchulainn stands out as an exemplum of chivalric stainless behaviour and self-control, who rejects violence *per se* and who is never caught in morally debasing situations.

Though, the impact of British stereotypes on the Irish imagination was more evident in the selection of desired and desirable qualities attributed to exemplary characters which did not pertain to the literary world of ancient sagas. As previously noted, avoiding the appearance of being stiffly didactic was essential if a journal wanted to compete in the juvenile publishing industry of twentieth-century Ireland, when young people started 'reading for pleasure'. At the same time, for the youngsters it was also important to read stories to which they could easily relate. Thus, nationalists strove to put forward an ideal that any Irish boy could attain. The cultivation of character reached far beyond the richest, the cleverest or the smartest boys in Ireland: it was a goal for all young Irish to develop those qualities that would guarantee the prosperity of the Irish nation. A comment placed at the end of an episode of the *Barton's Island* serial – a serial about three boys enjoying their summer holidays exploring the island of the title – is illustrative of this conviction. Directly addressing his readership the author of the story asks them not

> to make the comment that "The Three Musketeers" are rather ordinary and not, perhaps, sufficiently daring; I agree, and thank goodness they are not a whit like the boys who

[462] See L. Perry Curtis, *Anglo-Saxon and Celts*, cit., p. 54.
[463] Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture*, cit., 25.
[464] Maria, Tymoczko, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation*, cit., pp. 23-24. "The blind hysterics of the Celt" is a reference to Lord Tennyson's In Memoriam, quoted in L. Perry Curtis, *Anglo-Saxon and Celts*, cit., pp. 54-61.

> figure in juvenile stories I won't name; boys who are impossible heroes, and who should, if the phrase is not too strong, be held in contempt by all right-thinking people[465]

In these stories there was no room for fabulous heroes who, showing off an outstanding intellect or physical prowess, never faltered in their goals.

The choice of more relatable "ordinary" heroes, furthermore, points to the fact that the attributes of a 'real' manly man were believed to be open to any class. The Irish Boy Scouts, for instance, were living examples of the Irish ideal boy. In the depiction offered by *Our Boys* in October 1919, the Boys Scout were represented as a compound, in body and flesh, of desirable qualities – patriotism, discipline (they are loyal to their instructor and respect orders) and athletic prowess: "day by day" – a scout recounted – "decked out in our new costume, and with short poles in our hands, we climbed hills, bathed, and engaged in various other athletic activities". Their patriotism is fuelled by the habit of meeting at night "in a small hall to recite national poems and read stories from Irish history, especially about the ancient Fianna of Ireland".[466]

Exemplary is also the series by Wilf Diamond titled Diddy Stories", which purported to be a realistic account of the life of an athlete. The serial, indeed, began in the following way: "Diddy Stories. A series of short stories relating true incidents from the life of a champion athlete". In contradiction to one's expectations, however, the serial is not a mere succession of tales recounting the athletic feats of this "champion athlete". On the contrary, the emphasis is placed on the moral qualities of Diddy, who despite reaching "the topmost rung on the ladder of athletic fame in more branches than one", was a boy "of modest disposition". Recurrently, the narrator specified that "being rather of a modest and retiring disposition he kept the knowledge of his aquatic abilities to himself".[467] Appreciation for his lack of vanity is stated in uncompromising terms.

That physical prowess was not deemed a virtue if not accompanied by moral qualities is evidenced also by a school-story by Patrick Pearse, *The Wandering Hawk*, featured in instalments by *Fianna* over the course of two years, 1915 and 1916. As said previously, it would be too simplistic to dismiss *Fianna* as a cluster of propagandistic pieces. The monthly was certainly of its age, competing in a modern publishing industry and with a modern readership in mind: thus, its editors were not afraid to publish a story whose genre pertained to British tradition. British imported periodicals had made Irish children familiar with the

[465] *Our Boys*, Christmas Number 1915, p. 116.
[466] *Our Boys*, October 1919, p. 35.
[467] *Our Boys*, July 1922, p. 368.

stories of derring-do and high principle set in English public schools, and some Irish authors thought the genre could and should be Gaelicised.[468] Therefore, a few Gaelic writers attempted this genre popular with young readers at the time – one whose adventures required no exotic setting – and Pearse himself had taken the lead here with his serialised story in English, *The Wandering Hawk*. In particular, *The Wandering Hawk* is a good example of how Pearse took an essentially British kind of story and, far from producing an eulogy to the institution that forged "the Aristo-Military Elite"[469] of the Empire, reoriented the thrust of the narrative towards the Fenian, and by extension separatist, cause.

For sure, *The Wandering Hawk* is an interesting piece of writing, having been authored by the leader of the Easter Rising himself, who relied on his experience as schoolmaster and principal. On the other hand, it is also a good example of how nationalist ideas were refashioned into an entertaining reading for a youthful audience. Providing a familiar context such as the school one helped to make advanced nationalist ideals more understandable and relevant to the young readership. In the specific instance, the story, by providing a familial context and relatable characters, conveyed the notion that anyone could mould themselves on desirable lines.

The Wandering Hawk is set in a school at the time of the Fenian rebellion of 1867, as one of the leaders of the unsuccessful revolt – the "Wandering Hawk" of the title – disguises himself as a new teacher of the St. Fintan's School.[470] The description of the fictive boarding school is of particular interest as it mirrors some fundamental features of the life and schooling at St. Enda's, especially with regard to sporting practice: the school is surrounded by the hurling and football fields; the boys participate into tournaments among colleges and

[468] *Fianna* was not the only one paper to feature school-stories, but *Our Boys* is not included in the number. As Philip O'Leary puts it: "There were a good number of such stories in Irish in the bilingual magazine *Our Girls* which offered a prize for the best story received in several categories, one of which was School Stories. Judging from the number of works of this kind published in the journal's short run of a little over two years, this sort of thing had a genuine appeal for the readership. Curiously, the Christian Brothers magazine *Our Boys* did not run such stories, relying instead on a regular supply of patriotic historical tales, detective stories, and westerns in both Irish and English". See Philip O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State, 1922-1939*, University College Dublin, Dublin, 2004, p. 194.

[469] "Aristo-Military Elite" is a phrase employed by Martin Green to refer to the social stratum of young men who, having attended a British public school, moved on to administrative or military offices in the Empire. See Martin Green*, Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, Routledge, London, 1980.

[470] The story opens on the boys of St. Fintan's School determined to give a new master a bad time. All sorts of ideas as to how best to annoy him are discussed, but when the Head Master introduces Kilgallon, something in the new master's personality interests the boys who forget to rebel. They nicknamed him "The Little Captain" and soon are listening with intense interest to the stories of Wolfe Tone and other Irish heroes which arose out of the History Class. Gradually the talk comes down to the contemporary age, the 1860s, and soon the boys were taking a breathless interest in "The Wandering Hawk". This was the name given to John Dunleary, alias Warren, a young National Schoolmaster who has proved himself a great Fenian organiser, on whose head was the price of 500 pounds. The boys will later find out that Dunleary is their "Little Captain".

are often described "sauntering round the football field";[471] physical prowess, to be cultivated through the practice of native games, is deemed desirable. The most popular student is Clery, whom the first-person narrator describes as looking

> Like a little saint, his hair which was fair and in crisp little curls, making a sort of aureole around him. I always thought that his head was very shapely, and that it was very nobly poised on the neck and shoulders. His face was almost like a girl's […] but he was not girlish in any other of his ways. He was our centre-forward in football. He was our best swimmer. He was by far the cleverest and most daring of us all in the gymnasium – there was hardly anything he could not do with his body. And he had the sunniest temper I have ever known, he had a quaint humour, and a very valiant heart.[472]

Just as the most admired student of the school is Clery, the "cleverest and most daring […] in the gymnasium", so the most respected teacher is Mr. Slattery, who was "so thoroughly a man, so hearty and joyous in his manhood, that it was good to be his friend, to be taught by him, to obey him in the football field". The latter "stood first" in the boys' regard, as he made them "think that scholarship was a very noble thing" and that playing the native games was a crucial aspect in a young man's physical and moral growth.[473]

By looking up at inspirational characters such as Clery and Mr. Slattery, the young readers thus learned to appreciate the inherent value of sporting practice as instrumental to develop a fit body. However, the narrator is careful in emphasising the moral qualities of Clery, such as his "valiant heart", "the sunniest temper" and great self-control. Notable physical strength and courage are also combined in this character together with the ability to inspire loyalty; the outward appearance as a "little saint" mirrors the purity of mind. What the narrator really admires of Clery is his ability to never lose his temper, even in dangerous situations: when he is attacked together with his classmates by the British for having helped the Little Captain, it is him who ultimately manages to help the others to safety.[474]

Putting forward a new ideal that would contrast with British stereotypes meant to carefully select the desirable and desired specific characteristics. As passingly mentioned on various occasions, self-discipline was among the most desirable. The analysis of the story "A Plucky American Boy" by Ethelred Breeze Barry, published in *Our Boys* in December 1917[475], may be taken as a productive starting point to better understand the importance Irish nationalist credited to self-discipline. "A Plucky American Boy" tells the story of Neil Wentworth, a boy forged at a school where they play Gaelic football: "a thick-set, broad-

[471] Patrick Pearse, *The Wandering Hawk*, in *Fianna*, May 1915, p. 6.
[472] Patrick Pearse, *The Wandering Hawk*, in *Fianna*, February 1915, p. 7.
[473] Patrick Pearse, *The Wandering Hawk*, in *Fianna*, February 1915, pp. 4-5.
[474] Patrick Pearse, *The Wandering Hawk*, in *Fianna*, June 1915, p. 5.
[475] *Our Boys*, December 1917, pp. 98-100.

shouldered fellow" for whom "dodging is not in his line". Neil "has always been a favourite with his schoolmates, and now his popularity has been heightened by his plucky rush"; he plays against the advice of his parents, and luckily so: one day, charged with the transfer of a considerable amount of money, he is assailed by a robber of Italian origins while he is taking the money to the appointed destination. The robber clutches him by the shoulders, but "the boy breaks away from him and runs down the road a little distance".

However, the Italian man assails Neil another time with the aid of his comrades. Fortunately, also on this occasion, the training proves to be salvific. The narrator wonders: "He has beaten his way through the school goalkeepers, and are these workmen, who have been loafing for weeks, likely to prove any tougher than the young athletes who have been training constantly all the fall?" The answer to this rhetorical question is no. Neil remembers an advice an old player gave him when he first entered upon his football career: "Remember, it is not merely brute strength that wins a game, but the scientific use of your strength. And keeping your wits about you is half of the battle". With swift movements only, he wittily escapes the clutches of the robbers without taking recourse to violence: "he has outwitted four men, and has not struck a single blow". Not losing his temper, but keeping his instinctual reactions in check, Neil manages to save himself: "as he runs over the hard road they hotly pursue him, but he knows they have no chance once is ahead". Had he unleashed his aggressiveness, or merely relied on his "brute strength", Neil could have not survived the attack – significantly comments the narrator. The tale's conclusion is particularly emphatic: "Neil Wentworth is captain of a college football team now, and his fame as a rusher is widespread. Many an exciting run has he made while thousands applauded; yet in all his career no rush stands out with such startling distinctness as the one on the old Gloucester Pike".[476]

The emphasis in these stories on the characteristics of self-improvement, self-control, and purity of mind is reflective of the nationalists' attempt to present images of Irish boys that were alternative to the reckless, hot-tempered Irishmen depreciated by the British. In particular, it was the young Gaelic athlete who acquired a paradigmatic function as the exemplar of an assertive Irish manliness that combined moral and physical virtues. The *Gaelic Athletic Annual* of 1907-1908, presented the hurling and football player as "a matchless athlete, sober, pure in mind, speech and deed, self-possessed, self-reliant, self-respecting, loving his religion and his country with a deep and restless love, earnest in

[476] *Our Boys*, December 1917, p. 99.

thought and effective in action".[477] Not only did the athlete provide a symbol of full-grown masculinity for the boys and young men of Ireland, who had been written off as feminine or childish in British fictional representations: by mastering his nature yet remaining boldly masculine, the athlete also displayed precisely that emotional equilibrium of which his compatriots were said to lack.[478]

This depiction was refracted in the juvenile papers an inordinate amount of times. Athletes were emblems of moral and physical health that should spur the reader to personal emulation. It was a standard that could be worked to and as an example to build off. The wealth of tales about athletic exploits in the nationalist papers served to call on the youth of Ireland to purge themselves of both their unbridled instincts and their degrading femininity.

In the wealth of tales devoted to athletic feats, the column "Irish Athletes of Renown", which started after the Anglo-Irish War to celebrate Irish athletes, is exemplary. In the very last issue (the 32nd) of this series, the author explained the reasons underpinning the inauguration of such a long series:

> I have now dealt with the careers of over thirty of our greatest representatives in the athletic arena. This list is far from exhausted […] The task was undertaken to familiarise the young generation with the characters and achievements of men who have brought us fame in athletics, who preserved and perpetuated the tradition of bodily fitness and high endeavour which since time was young been a proud possession of our race. These articles are not written as elegies, nor in praise of a long past epoch and people, but as a stimulus to the conservation of customs and attributes which can still benefit and adorn our manhood. Perhaps at a later period I may resume my chronicles, and endeavour to do justice to the worth many more men who have also brought honour to Ireland. Meantime, let young Irish men ponder the lessons I have tried to give to live nobly and emulate those whose deeds have been recorded here.[479]

The passage is thick with racist rhetoric highlighting the quintessential athletic prowess of the Gaelic race, a recurring discursive response to the xenophobia of Victorian and Edwardian England, which caricatured the Irish as being physically and mentally inferior to those of Anglo-Saxon stock. The passage is also illustrative of the educational intent of the articles published in the juvenile papers: the athletes presented in the series had to be emulated ("let young Irish men […] emulate those whose deeds have been recorded here") by the young readers, because they possessed those "attributes which can still benefit and adorn our manhood". In a similar way, the whole series is particularly illustrative of the qualities which had to be nurtured in the young Irish boys.

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[477] *Gaelic Athletic Annual of 1907-1908*, Dublin, Gaelic Athletic Association, 1908.
[478] Joseph Nugent, "The Sword and the Prayerbook: Ideals of Authentic Irish Manliness," *Victorian Studies*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2008, p. 602.
[479] *Our Boys*, 18th August 1927, p. 861.

The following description Peter O'Connor, a successful jumper and sprinter, bears witness to this statement. O'Connor is remembered as

> a total abstainer, a devout Catholic, and a generous and honourable gentleman. Kings and Queens have applauded him and his fellow-Irishmen in the Olympic Games in Greece. […] He alone claimed recognition for Ireland as a nation before that historic assembly by raising the green flag in the Stadium. Always it is written of these genial Irish giants that they bore themselves as nature's gentlemen, the first to whisper sympathy to a defeated rival, or to congratulate a successful one.[480]

Sportsmanship, honourable behaviour and physical prowess were commonly praised in athletes. Yet, in the specific instance, the contributor ascribed to Peter O'Connor also some saintly qualities, as he consistently emphasised the athlete's abstinence and private prayer. The embedded message is that the ascetic regimen and salutary discipline of the champion athletes are worth applauding also in the case of boys, because they help the young boy to stay pure. On many occasions, *Our Boys* put forward a masculine ideal endowed with qualities that were traditionally reserved for priesthood. Self-discipline bordered on saintly asceticism, on ecclesiastical self-restraint and abstinence. Especially, in the pages of *Our Boys*, the readers is constantly pointed to a continuous process of renunciation as a defining characteristic of the sporting career of an athlete. Young readers were repeatedly provided with biographical facts related to real athletes, which served to emphasise the weightiness of the message of resisting the pangs of temptation, because capitulation to them was regarded as symptomatic of emasculation. Athletes were lionised as paragons of determination and self-discipline, like the Finnish champion Ville Ritola (1896–1982), whose "rigid abstention from alcohol and tobacco" contributed to his success".[481]

Young Ireland and *Our Boys* both published the following message by the Celt, in which the revival of native games was regarded as interrelated with the preservation of moral cleanliness: "we want our young manhood keen and adept in native pastimes. We also want those pastimes to glow with the ideals of 'Courage and Truth and Stainless Youth'".[482] Emphasis on "purity" is evident also in a comment featured in an editorial article by Brother De Sales for *Our Boys*, in which he stated that "fidelity to the practices of religion, especially Confession and Communion, reading good books, good companions, total

[480] *Our Boys*, May 1915, p. 251.
[481] *Our Boys*, May 1925, p. 46.
[482] 1/9/1927, p. 889.

abstinence, pure air, diligence at work, manly sport, physical exercise, and hobbies, are all aids to a clean life".[483]

The nationalists' opposition to youthful drinking and smoking is indicative of an increasing fear that many men were not physically fit. Although moderate smoking was accepted for adults, there was general agreement that it was harmful for youth as it stunted growth and weakened the growing body, with devastating consequences in adulthood. Therefore, for youths of all classes, abstinence from alcohol and tobacco was essential. Again the fear of a decline of the Irish race, fuelled by English stereotypes, haunts the pages of the periodicals: behind the appeals to abstinence we can glimpse the spectre of degeneration that so worried the nationalists.

In conclusion, these documents reveal a rather monolithic attitude towards the masculine ideal, deeply conditioned by the representations of the Irish propagated by the British. It was a kind of masculinity focused on athletic prowess, moral probity and patriotic love of country – all qualities that, being neither innate nor eternal, had to preserved or acquired and then nourished.

[483] *Our Boys*, November 1915, p. 66.

CONCLUSION

The present dissertation has outlined the various meanings which the nationalists attached to revival and the development of the Gaelic Games in Ireland. This aim was achieved by analysing a corpus of periodicals intended for juveniles which featured stories, both of a factual and fictional nature, on sport-related themes. This was not a literary study of juvenile fiction, but instead an attempt to investigate the whole network of words and images surrounding the revival of the Gaelic games in Ireland. It has been shown that much of the material here examined reflected a preoccupation with the informal and informal education of Ireland's youth. Moreover, the study also demonstrated the importance attributed to sports – particularly the Gaelic games of hurling and football – in building the Irish community, constructing the Irish identity and, by forging physically fit young men, founding the Irish state-nation.

Interestingly, many decades later, the importance credited to Gaelic games was officially reaffirmed by nationalists. The occasion was the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966. Cusack's initial projects and the further development of the GAA were enshrined in a conventional image that emphasised the role played by the Association and its members in the struggle for independence, as depositories of the truly Gaelic character and keepers of the national flame. Indeed, speaking on the eve of St Patrick's Day in 1966, then GAA president Alf Murray stated what the association's mission was:

> The GAA regards its national attitude as an essential part of the obligation that history and tradition impose upon us if we are to strengthen the Irish character and provide at least a part of the spiritual background that ensures the continuance of the struggle for the nation's soul.[484]

The GAA and the games figured prominently in the commemorations of the fiftieth and, as we can gather from the abovementioned passage, there was the reassertion of the traditional representation of games as a pillar of the nationalist movement.

[484] Quoted in Seán Moran, "Playing a Major Part in History: The GAA and the Easter Rising", in *The Irish Times*, 5th March 2016, p. 3.

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