Elena Ogliari

Birth of an Independent Ireland

Moulding the Young in the Irish Periodical Press

LED Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto

E. Ogliari - *Birth of an Independent Ireland: Moulding the Young in the Irish Periodical Press* - Milano, LED, 2020
ISSN 2283-5628 - ISBN 978-88-7916-951-6 - https://www.ledonline.it/index.php/LCM-journal/pages/view/LCM-series

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Dipartimento di Scienze della Mediazione Linguistica e di Studi Interculturali
Università degli Studi di Milano

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LED Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto
Via Cervignano 4 - 20137 Milano
www.lededizioni.com - www.ledonline.it - E-mail: led@lededizioni.com

Volume pubblicato con il contributo del Dottorato in studi linguistici, letterari e interculturali in ambito europeo ed extra-europeo dell'Università degli Studi di Milano

In copertina:
Dublin, Garden of Remembrance.

Videoimpaginazione: Paola Mignanego
Stampa: Litogì

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Introduction
The Relevance of Periodical Literature

As Ireland moves through the centenary of commemoration of the War of Independence and the establishment of the Irish Free State, it seems only right to direct our attention to the primary role played by the youths in the revolutionary years between 1913 and 1923, when Irish young people actively participated in the life of their country as agents of nation-building. In part, they had been taught how to do so. Although they were never mere recipients who passively absorbed preformed systems of values, the young had been mentored by nationalist groups and individuals to become active citizens and the builders of a free, independent Ireland. In the early twentieth century, multiple actors of nationalist sympathies impacted on their lives through social and cultural activities such as schooling, youth organisations, and cultural production ranging from historical works to popular periodical literature (cf. Boylan and Gallagher 2018, 2).

According to these nationalists, the reading of suitable, educational material was especially effective in awakening Irish national consciousness. In 1919, as the country was plunged in the turmoil of the Anglo-Irish war, one of the periodicals for juveniles examined here, *St. Enda's*, reminded its readers of the political importance and educational value of reading, as "by reading and meditating on our history we should prepare ourselves to serve our country when she demands our aid, no matter what the cost. And we should always keep Gavan Duffy's advice before our minds – 'Educate that you may be free'" (*SE* Jul. 1919, 231).

The crucial 1913-1923 decade was a key period in the development of the Irish periodical press, central to which was a focus on publications intended for juveniles. As seen in the quotation above, the aim of the inculcation of moral values in readers, which connoted the ethos of much reading material for the young in the nineteenth century, com-

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bined in the revolutionary period with a concern to create a national consciousness. Irish nationalists believed that dedicated periodicals were particularly formative, as they could be used to foster or re-invigorate strong feelings of patriotism and to mould a new citizenry according to nationalist values.

This belief was not a novelty – in fact, it was rooted in experience. Since the mid-nineteenth century, when the first Irish separatist newspapers *Freeman* and *The Nation* began to disseminate nationalist rhetoric and mobilise public opinion, the Irish nationalist press had been a key factor in awakening a political consciousness. Newspapers and magazines were decisive in 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 also throughout the diasporic Irish communities in Great Britain and America (Andrews 2014, 7; Tilley 2020, 139).

In the 1910s, this nationalist paper landscape was completed by the establishment of four periodicals for Irish youths, as vying for their cultural allegiance there emerged *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's*. In the nationalists' eyes, they were the long-awaited Irish replies to the successful British papers modelled on the *Boy's Own Paper*, the home-grown substitutes that could facilitate the young's access to politics and culture in a desirable form.

Their cultural and political relevance in 'colonial' Ireland should not be belittled. In the decades around 1900, debates surrounding the role of boys and girls in the long struggle for national self-determination were to the fore in the country. At this time, Gavin Foster observes, "the meaning and value of youth underwent a radical transformation in nationalist political discourse" (2013, 52). Throughout the nineteenth century, Irish youths had occupied the lowest strata of the social status hierarchy, being subject to the authority of parents, employers, the clergy, or other elders. But young Ireland's bleak status was enhanced for the better in the early 1900s when the youths began to be valued in terms of their relationship to Ireland as its builders and citizens; nationalists were now identifying in Irish boys and girls the main agents of the struggle for independence and nation-building. From this new perspective, both their formal and informal education became a matter of concern for the nationalists, and educational activities taking place outside school, such as reading and sporting practices, aroused the interest of Patrick Pearse and his acolytes.

In the period stretching from the 1890s to the inter-war years, literacy was very high among the young (O'Neill 2017, 247), resulting in an ever-expanding readership that elected story papers as favourites. These

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formed the central core of youthful reading both in Britain and in Ireland (Keogh 2015, 701) [1]. 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 [and girls] of all classes read at some point in their lives" (Boyd 2003, 1; cf. also Springhall 1994, 567).

Irish nationalists directed their attention to the periodicals gobbled up by boys and girls in their country, sensing the influence juvenile literature had on the imagination of its readership, and that the periodical press could also serve as an educational, political instrument. What they found out was worrisome.

Since Ireland was still part of the British distributive system in the early twentieth century, this popular section of the publishing market was saturated with British products, and British story papers promoting an imperialist ethos irreconcilable with the nationalists' enjoyed enormous success in the island. On both sides of the Irish sea, generation after generation, thousands of boys and girls sat enthralled, reading about the feats 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 (O'Neill 2009, 148; cf. Dunae 1980; Deane 2011, 690).

Popular magazines such as *The Gem* or *The Union Jack* – 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 or girl, but also to provide them with a specific world view. They communicated to Ireland's youth numerous representations of imperialist ideal boyhood and girlhood that were not welcomed by the Irish nationalists who were then trying to free their country from the British yoke.

In 1909, the editors of *Bean na hÉireann* [2] lamented that "the consistent neglect of the children has been the big mistake of all national

[1] The success of periodical literature, still unthreatened by the establishment of the comic book, and the rise of the related mass-markets in Ireland and Britain were supported by mechanical innovations, advances in printing technology, parliamentary acts, and high levels of literacy among the youth (Drotner 1988, 5).

[2] *Bean na hÉireann* 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 in Ireland (qtd. in Strachan and Nally 2012, 117). There is now an ample scholarship that places emphasis on this monthly starting from the pioneering *Daughters of Erin: Five Women of the Irish Renascence* by Elizabeth Coxhead (1965).

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organisations" (*BnhÉ* Jul. 1909; cf. McElligott 2019, 350), because that negligence had led Irish youth to be vulnerably exposed to a whole gamut of noxious cultural influences. Patrick Pearse and Douglas Hyde, among others, were particularly troubled by the insidious influence of mass-produced imperial fiction, which targeted a young readership and glorified the British colonial project. So, the nationalists' reaction was not long in coming. They took action to create their own Irish-made substitutes aiming to lure boys and girls into their campaigns for Ireland's cultural and political independence. Some attempts failed; others were notably successful.

The Irish periodicals for juveniles that reached wide circulation at the beginning of the twentieth century were the above-mentioned *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's*. In the wake of *The Nation*, they carried out a political and cultural programme by catering for both the delight and instruction of Ireland's youth. They published creative literary work alongside political and critical commentary on pressing matters, as the imperative of these newly-formed papers was to bring Ireland's young readers into the public space of politics, so that they would contribute to shaping the process of nation-building from their homes – as it was mainly the case with girls – and at governmental level.

Editors and contributors meant to mould the youths in a nationalist direction through their writings: this implied creating a forum where to discuss Irish politics, culture, and the young's contribution to the nationalist struggle, which could be partially controlled. The authors took pain to shape the opinions of readers according to their own ideas; in this regard, they came to popularise specific receptions of momentous events in Irish history, such as the First World War and the 1916 Easter Rising. Their discursive representations in the periodicals changed according to shifts in the Irish nationalists' view on them to reflect best the oft-evolving opinions of the editors and parties involved.

The periodicals also actively constructed very specific images of Irish girlhood and boyhood, generally designed to foster a sense of loyalty to Ireland and the nationalist cause. The analysis of the constructions of girlhood and boyhood in these periodicals unearths, on one hand, some tensions between an ideal of female domesticity and the changing realities of Irish girls' lives at the beginning of the twentieth century and, on the other, the negotiation of British stereotypes about Irish males.

All these aspects deserve scholarly attention. *Birth of an Independent Ireland* thus examines the periodicals that informed, amused, and often instructed young people across all classes of Irish nationalist society at the beginning of the twentieth century. They emerged during

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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 analysing this kind of publishing genre, it is possible to raise a complex network of images, symbols, and discourses related to the boys and girls of Ireland and, more specifically, the role they were asked to play in this crucial period of Irish history.

Focusing on the periodicals intended for juveniles and the political and cultural investment in the young generations meant deliberately locating *Birth of an Independent Ireland* at the intersection between Youth Studies and Periodical Studies. Youth Studies are burgeoning in Ireland, but scholars of youth's culture and history have just begun to cast light on the nationalist investment in Irish boys and girls during the first two decades of the twentieth century, when the nationalists' struggle grew to its most intense. The 2000s have seen an increasing interest in the ways that youth was socially and politically constructed and represented at the time. Scholarly work relating to 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. Brendan Walsh (2007; 2013), Marnie Hay (2009; 2011; 2012), Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan (2015) are among the most prominent scholars who have published on these subjects, as they were intrigued by the increasing public concern with the 'problem' of youth in early-twentieth-century Ireland.

Inquiries into the histories of youth and adolescence in Ireland have accelerated in recent years stimulating, in turn, the foundation of the History of Irish Childhood Research Network in 2014. 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 periodical literature in forging character, instilling pride and national awareness, as well as its being instrumental to psychologically train future revolutionaries, have not been fully explored. Hopefully, *Birth of an Independent Ireland* will saturate this lacuna.

In the rich panorama of articles and monographs devoted to the periodical press in the crucial period 1884-1922, there are only passing references to periodicals for the young. The interest in the "rank-and-file" brought about by David Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish Life: 1913-1921* (1977; cf. Ó Tuathaigh 2015, 4) paved the way for the publication of detailed studies on highly specific topics such as the interdependence between the Irish periodical press of the early twentieth century and the

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establishment of the Irish Free State. In 1985, Virginia Glandon's *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press: Ireland, 1900-1922* in turn spurred the emergence of more recent studies that have revealed the dynamism of Ireland's journalism in promoting and propagating nationalist notions. I here refer to the works by Ben Novick (2001; 2002), Simon Potter (2004), Karen Steele (2007), and Ann Andrews (2014).

Even though they centred their works on the press addressed to an adult readership, I am indebted to these scholars because they provided me with a blueprint for my analysis, and demonstrated that periodicals are, on the one hand, efficient instruments for registering the course and shifts of a civilisation (North qtd. in Pykett 1989, 102) and, on the other, complex texts inserted in a dynamic exchange with the cultural and ideological movements that produced and were shaped by them. If these hypotheses proved to be true with the periodicals for adult readers, it is high time we turned our attention to the periodicals for juveniles, still an understudied section of Irish popular culture.

As early as 1940, in the essay "Boys' Weeklies", George Orwell acknowledged that boys' story papers were worthy of critical analysis and comment, defining them as "the best indication of what the mass of English people really feels and thinks" (Orwell 1970, 530). Drawing on Orwell's insights, the juvenile periodicals in my corpus can be employed as rich sources for understanding the ideas and attitudes of the society that generated them. They promulgated the nationalist ethos of their contributors and editors, mirroring the interests and concerns of these people, to the point that we can glimpse the lineaments of Irish nationalist society in their pages. Yet these periodicals should not be viewed only as barometers of the concerns and anxieties haunting Irish society in the early twentieth century: at the time, they were also a means of constructing opinion and identity.

They constructed specific discourses and images which they propagated through texts of "multifarious nature" (North qtd. in Pykett 1989, 101), as the periodicals were eclectic mixes of fictional stories, articles, advertising wrappers and cartoons, which variously contributed to putting forward an articulated discourse for their youthful readers. *Our Boys* and the likes belonged to a system in which each text, broadly intended, was not only part of the issue featuring it, but was also in a dialogical relationship with the other periodicals and cultural-political initiatives of the nationalists. As Margaret Beetham suggested, 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" (1989, 97).

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The openness of the periodical format is the reason why, to put the primary sources into context and shed light on the implications of their contents, *Birth of an Independent Ireland* includes a wider range of archival reading material: ephemera, newspapers' articles detailing the activities for the youths organised by nationalist groups, police reports, and even private manuscripts. The methodological approach employed here draws also on Raymond William's insights that the periodical press cannot be isolated from "the cognate forms of other writing, publishing and reading", and that any periodical should be understood as part of the culture and society it comes from, and "within the actual means and conditions of [its] production" (Williams 1978, 41; 1983, 210).

Textual analysis was first set against the paper background formed by other contemporary documents, and then incorporated into the historical narrative of the turbulences of the revolutionary period. Long quotations and extracts from the periodicals occur repeatedly throughout this volume, both to substantiate my arguments and to save readers the trouble of tracking down the referenced magazines, which are not easily accessible. The result is a methodological approach that combines historically informed close reading with an interest in the specificities of the periodical (Ardis 2012, 1; Beetham 2015, 323).

Among the notable peculiarities of the format there is, as hinted at previously, its openness. The openness of each text to what surrounds it within or outside the issue's covers, and openness towards the reader. The relationship of the periodical with its readership is open-ended insofar as the reader can variously make sense of the periodical's meaning; periodicals do 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 a time, and in the order they wish. Moreover, readers are not only involved in the production of their 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". With *Our Boys* and the other magazines, readers could "intervene directly [...] by writing letters, comments and other contributions" (Beetham 1989, 97-99; cf. Matthews 2012) – an involvement solicited and welcomed by the periodicals, which endeavoured to establish a dialogue with their readers by appealing to their agency.

The in-depth analysis of the periodicals' fictional and non-fictional writings provides the reader with a 'window' into Irish nationalist society of the early twentieth century and the strategies employed by the nationalists to involve their readers in a paper arena where to discuss central national matters. Through opinion articles, tales, and ballads,

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they concurred to spread anti-British sentiment and gave impetus to the nationalists' campaigns, while debating the potential contribution of their youthful readers to the cause. These juvenile periodicals were among the engines of the Irish struggle for independence that valued Ireland's youth as its foundation stone.

To appreciate the multifaceted investment of the nationalists in the boys and girls of Ireland, the book is divided into five chapters. The first section of the book is devoted to presenting the key factors in the establishment of the four periodicals, which are analysed by taking into account the wider social and cultural context they came from. As previously mentioned, textual analysis, if mostly focused on the fictional and non-fictional content of the story papers, extends to other bodies of writing: manuscripts, parliamentary debates, government reports, and other periodicals. The juxtaposed analysis of texts of such a multifarious nature enables the reader to understand the prevailing attitudes and socio-cultural mores of the time as well as the political and cultural implications of the periodicals' contents.

The introductory part revolves around the notion of 'autonomy', at this time intended as a broad one since the achievement of political self-government was tightly interwoven with the thriving of an original culture and 'separate' mind-set. *Our Boys* and its homologues had to be entertaining and well-made to be successful and reach out to wide audiences. By detailing the main characteristics of the periodicals forming the corpus, I aim to demonstrate how the nationalists made the effort to create an autonomous production of juvenile periodicals, convinced of their high educational value and political relevance. Parenthetically, I firmly believe that the nationalists' investment in establishing this Irish-made periodical literature justifies the study of such neglected section of the publishing market, and my attempt to fill in a lacuna still noticeable in Irish Studies.

The notion of 'autonomy' is then further spooned to demonstrate how forging 'autonomous' Irish people was an essential stage in the creation of independent Ireland. This implied moulding young people intellectually free from the British yoke, who held specific opinions on national matters and the relationship between Ireland and Westminster. Therefore, chapter three discusses the reception the periodicals put forward of crucial events such as the Parliamentary ultimate struggle for constitutional independence, the Great War, and the Easter Rising.

In the same line, the last chapters of *Birth of an Independent Ireland* address the reasons why the early twentieth century saw the emergence of peculiar ideals of Irish boy and girl, by highlighting the tensions characterizing and begetting these models. Following a section on the

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images of Irish girlhood constructed by the periodicals and their preoccupation with girls' position in relation to wider, national society, the last chapter of this book 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 to counteract the stereotypical characterizations of the Irish as inferiors in need of Anglo-Saxon domination (McDevitt 2004, 18). The periodicals assisted the Irish in the formation of a new ideal of boy who was to be the maker of Ireland's independence and the cornerstone of a new community.

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1.
The Long Quest for Irish-Made Periodicals

> It is impossible to overrate the importance of the influence of fiction on the national character and culture.
>
> "What Boys Read", *Fortnightly Review* Feb. 1886, 248

> You read, too, of the Great British Empire. You do not read though of the deeds of the men of Ireland who were driven to desperation by the mocking power of the Great Empire.
>
> *Fianna* Dec. 1915, 8

> An Irish-Ireland generation will restore the greatness of the Ireland of Patrick and Colum and Brian; but a *shoneen* generation would ruin forever the fame and hopes of the Island of the Saints.
>
> *Young Ireland* 28 Apr. 1917, 1

1.1. How Ireland's youth became a matter of concern for the nationalists

The decades around the year 1900 were punctuated with a series of cultural and political events that fuelled the drive for Irish national freedom, a goal eventually achieved in 1922. The establishment of the Free State was the culmination of multiple and intertwined cultural, social, and political processes that had begun many years before, as the whole set of processes is commonly believed to have been triggered by the tragic demise of Charles Stewart Parnell in 1891 (Maume 1999, 1-13). Parnell's repudiation by the Irish Party after the O'Shea divorce scandal in 1890 resulted in a political vacuum in which no single, strong figure was capable to stand out. 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 (Glandon 1985, 2).

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For such a great impact on Irish politics, however, the tragic end of Parnell represented a watershed also in Ireland's cultural and media history. If Irish energy had been traditionally directed towards the implementation of Home Rule, now many people reacted to the political vacuum by seeking out new modes of expression so that the same energy was transferred from politics to culture (Lyons 1979, 27). Declan Kiberd has claimed that the failure at the political level made "a younger generation of intellectuals [turn] from politics back to culture" (1996, 23). 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. (qtd. in Valente 2011, 63)

If Irish politics was struggling, literature and culture flourished. Yeats's himself played a crucial role in this renaissance when, 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 tried to attain by re-publishing various works on Irish literature, setting up a network of libraries, and establishing 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 translations of the Ulster sagas and *History of Ireland*, by the activities of Yeats and his acolytes, and the crusade to preserve[1] the ancient Gaelic language started by Douglas Hyde. The Gaelic Revival in Ireland, in fact, was launched in 1892 by 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*"

[1] The government census of 1891 showed that less than 40,000 people spoke Gaelic exclusively out of a population of over 4 million. The datum was proved again by the census of 1901, which revealed that the number of Irish-speaking monoglots hovered around 38,000 people. 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 (Walsh 2013, 72-73).

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(Kiberd 1996, 138). 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 for a profound cultural transformation of the country; the newly-coined word contained in it "something harsh, something virulent", which adequately pointed to the rebellious strenuous action that was necessary to counteract the toxic effects of Anglicisation, the process whereby something is made English in form and nature (Hyde 1986, 179; cf. also O'Connor 2006, 190).

Hyde's speech stood out as a condemnation of what he saw as the slavish conformism of the Irish, who, in his eyes, had degenerated into a people of imitators aping everything English only because it was English: "We will become", Hyde prophesied, "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" (1986, 169). Hyde nevertheless contested the notion of Anglicisation as an inevitable process, implying that it could be in fact resisted and reversed. The tide had to be turned, Anglicisation thwarted. 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 the restoration of the Irish language to its pre-colonial status would engender a regeneration of the entire country. At the same time, the Irish were to strive for the creation of a modern literature in their ancient language. He advocated the "use of Anglo-Irish literature instead of English books, especially instead of English periodicals" as he encouraged 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*" (Hyde 1986, 169) [2].

Hyde also took action. He devoted his life to the regeneration of the country's fading Gaelic heritage, first as a folklorist and a poet, and then as a propagandist. Working side by side with historians like Eoin MacNeill and artists drawn from both the Protestant and Catholic ranks, he founded the Gaelic League as a movement for the preservation of the disappearing Irish language that would permeate all facets of Irish life and rebuild a modern Gaelic civilisation from within. Hyde believed that political independence would prove meaningless without a cultural

[2] *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*, instead, catered for a readership hungering for sensational accounts of crimes and disasters.

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individuality to be preserved and fostered (Hutchinson 1987, 2), so he created the Gaelic League with the intent of de-Anglicising Ireland by means of the promotion of authentic, home-grown traditions. From the 1890s, his Gaelic League steadily propagated "the idea of a separate cultural Irish nation" (Phoenix 1994, xv).

Hyde's ideas and project about a culture-driven regeneration achieved resonance among specific groups of Irish nationalists, who did not confine their fears concerning the corrupting effects of Anglicisation only to the uprooting of the Gaelic language or high expressions of art. As the nationalists pondered over aspects of Irish culture and life unrelated to Ireland's linguistic and highbrow literary milieu, they realised that many popular cultural items had been subject to the forces of Anglicisation with especially deleterious consequences for the Irish young. Particularly outspoken were groups of nationalists – the various dissident voices of the post-Parnell political panorama – who embraced Hyde's theories on the importance of Ireland's cultural renaissance, while directing their attention towards the youths. Not unlike Hyde, they believed that cultural autonomy was conducive and vital to political independence. More importantly, they deemed necessary to persuade the younger generations of Ireland's individuality, namely its cultural and quintessential separateness, to the point that the education of the young became paramount among the nationalists' preoccupations.

But why did Ireland's youth become a matter of concern for the nationalists?

In the late nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, new attention was paid to the youths of all social classes. Many factors promoted the increase in interest in Ireland's youngsters, but the nationalists' *fin-de-siècle* preoccupation with the young and their forging – as education was called – 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 as through its current one.

The broadening field of Irish Youth Studies has permitted to highlight the debates surrounding the role of boys and girls in the long struggle for national self-determination – debates which were to the front in the decades around 1900. Then, "the meaning and value of youth underwent a radical transformation in nationalist political discourse" (Foster 2013, 51). Throughout the nineteenth century, Irish youth had occupied the lowest strata of the social status hierarchy as they were subject to the authority of parents, employers, the clergy, or

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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 primary outlet for those looking at social and economic progress. But young Ireland's unenviable status was changed for the better when nationalists identified in Irish youths the main agents of both the struggle for independence and the nation-building.

Adolescence began to be regarded as a distinct and crucial phase of a person's development, in which the young could be trained in the serious matter of character-building for adulthood (Olsen 2014, 57). Character formation was regarded as the key to success at both the individual and national levels because it would help produce responsible citizens through mentored physical and moral development.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Irish nationalists could hardly be satisfied with the existing situation in juvenile education. They soon reckoned that Ireland's youth had to be weaned from British cultural influence and the imitation of British cultural norms. They detected and deprecated the sentiment of superficial sameness propagated by the manifestations of the anglicising forces in schools, in recreational associations, and in literature, where boys and girls were exposed to unionist, integrationist, and imperialist ideas. Not much room was given to promulgating the notion of Irish difference.

Periodical literature and school curriculums were thought to be particularly formative, but also the segments of education most redolent of British ethos and values. Irish nationalists believed that the minds and hearts of Ireland's boys and girls had been subdued by the British curriculum taught in National Schools and the anglicising fictions featured in the successful British magazines.

Since popular periodicals and education became the most contested terrains, the reasons underlying this phenomenon need to be addressed diffusely. The nationalist response to standardised schooling in Ireland is of relevance within the scope of this volume because it is revealing of the interest nationalists had in the young Irish. It also engendered the first concerted efforts to counteract the influences of Anglicisation in the context of formal and informal education. Later on, the periodicals established in the 1910s would draw 'ideological' nourishment from these earlier attempts, adding on to the diversified nationalist response to the Anglicisation of Irish juvenile culture.

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1.2. National Schools as 'instrumenti regni'

The relationship between indigenous culture and education in the British Empire has generated many, often conflicting, historical interpretations. If its promoters extolled imperial education as a liberalising and progressive instrument of the imperialist project, which could emancipate colonial societies from the darkness of ignorance, some contemporary scholars ventured to term it a "massive cannon in the artillery of empire" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995, 425). In their view, far from being instrumental to a progressive mission, colonial policies of education were nothing but *instrumenti regni* for the reproduction of the imperialist social order, the Anglicisation of indigenous culture, and the subduing of nationalistic disorder (Condon 1999, 36).

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 equipping Irish youth with the skills fundamental to the expanding administrative needs of the Imperial British state (cf. Relihan 2005, 128-129). 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 until 1908, when the teaching of Irish history was finally introduced in the curriculum of the National Schools.

I doubt that the nationalists harboured hopes that, thanks to its insertion, there would be now occasion for the discussion of Ireland's history of rebellion and reasons for it to be in the Irish classroom. This was unlikely and, indeed, the first outcomes did not look promising to the nationalists' eyes. The advanced nationalist *Irish Freedom* famously compared the teaching of Irish History to a sub-division of English Literature in the Senior Grade. Its contributors lamented that in the Senior Grade the "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". *Irish Freedom* drew the conclusion that the school curriculum was still sanitised of most references to Irish history and culture, notwithstanding the formal introduction of the relevant subject: it seemed that "it [was] the deliberate policy of many Irish schools *not* to teach their pupils the history of their country" (*IF* Nov. 1910, 2). Until 1922, when the Irish Free State came into existence, many nationalists continued to maintain that National

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Schools displayed hostility to the development of Irish nationality. Even after 1908 the teaching of history remained erratic, too dependent on the level of knowledge and interest of individual teachers (Quinn 2015, 144).

To the nationalist mind, the quality of the teaching of Irish history was not an isolated source of anxiety. The nationalists found the English syllabus equally problematic, thickened as it was with imperialist ideology. The paucity of references to Irish culture in the school curriculum contrasted sharply with the abundance of stories and anecdotes that celebrated heroic deeds in defence of the Empire (cf. Kiberd 1996, 148). Not content with the removal of Irish items, the National Board seemed indefatigable in presenting the Irish young with exemplary models of English heroes to imitate. Like other mouthpieces of Irish nationalism, *Irish Freedom* voiced the concern that Irish lore and myths would lose their appeal if matched against the great narratives of Clive of India or Nelson:

> 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. (*IF* Jan. 1911, 3)

Nationalists like the contributors to *Irish Freedom* attacked what they saw as colonially motivated schooling. In their pieces, it is impossible to separate the educational debate from the imperialist and nationalist discourses, persuaded as these people were that many schools in Ireland had the aim of making "a happy English child" out of an Irish one.

Incidentally, "A happy English child" is a line from the pedantic poem "A Child's Hymn of Praise" by Jane Taylor, published in the 1808 collection *Hymns for Infant Minds*. Despite its dubious artistic merit, the poem has attracted considerable interest among contemporary scholars of Irish nationalism and educational policies, because it epitomises certain assimilationist trends in the Irish school system of the past. Legend has it that Archbishop Whately, who played a key part in moulding the Irish school system in the mid-nineteenth century, made Dublin's children recite some lines from Taylor's poem during morning assemblies, specifically: "I thank the goodness and the grace / That on my birth have smiled: / And made me in these Christian days / A happy English child". Whately's impact on Irish standardised schooling should not be underrated. Historians have ascribed to his influence the fact that many

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textbooks used in Irish schools, instead of highlighting any separate identity that Ireland might possess, set forth the same assimilationist thrust embedded in Whately's use of Taylor's poem (Comerford 2003, 36; Hoppen 2016, 112-113). "A Child's Hymn of Praise" was first printed in an Irish textbook in 1835 and regularly continued to be featured in later editions, in which its integrationist function is enhanced by remarks in the section on geography such as "on the east coast of Ireland is England where the queen lives. Many people who live in Ireland were born in England, and *we speak the same language and are called one nation*". Douglas Hyde made direct reference to this passage in *A Literary History of Ireland* (1906, 636; cf. Quinn 2015, chap 8.), characterizing it as the epitome of British attempts to deny and abridge Irish difference in the school environment.

The nationalists' resentment with such educational content was inevitable and grew to a breaking point at the turn of the twentieth century. Resorting to the print media, they publicised their frustration with a curriculum which, they believed, was still too influenced by English culture and unionist ideology. In the booklet *Nationality in Irish Education* (1910), the nationalist commentator Eveleen Nicolls interpreted Whately's actions as evidence of the whole education system being "designed for the crushing of Irish nationality" (5). Nicolls argued that the curriculum was designed "entirely on English ideas" and that the Irish system of education was "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". National Schools were also unswerving in their plans "to frustrate the natural bond of affection between the child and his country" (1910, 4).

Patrick Pearse devoted the pamphlet *The Murder Machine* to this issue. In describing the English education system in Ireland as a "murder machine", the future 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 (Walsh 2013, 26). According to Pearse, education was but a vehicle of cultural assimilation, because 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 from *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

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> 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. (Pearse 1916, 15-16)

Admittedly, Pearse, Nicolls, and their disciples were not the first to point their fingers at the Board of Education and the syllabus they had implemented. These had already been the target, in the first half of the nineteenth century, of nationalists 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. Thomas Davis was especially sensitive to the machinations of the imperial educational crusade. In 1843, he wrote the essay *Schools and Study*, in which he bitterly criticised the system and its administrators, whom he described as "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 mid-nineteenth-century Irish nationalist William Smith O'Brien. He lamented that the teaching of youths 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" (*The Irishman* 21 Aug. 1858; Mangan 2012, 86; Quinn 2015, 38).

In brief, a polemical attitude towards the nation's educational system emerged soon after its establishment. This was a discourse that ripened through time (Andrews 2014, 14) to the point where the issue of dealing with Anglicisation required a most urgent action.

Patrick Pearse was in the forefront in the promotion of activities aimed at Ireland's youth that promoted an understanding of Irish cultural difference. Since the early twentieth century, he incited the Gaelic League to organise *Feisanna*, Irish dancing and singing competitions, for the young (*ACS* 26 Nov. 1904, 6)[3]. He devoted most of his adult life to education and schooling, as headmaster, teacher, and founder of

[3] *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 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 an almost fully Irish language journal (Steele 2007, 3-4).

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two schools: St. Enda's and its female equivalent St. Ita's. His work as an educator was markedly political in nature and, in his hands, schooling became a means of resistance to colonial dominance (Walsh 2013, 11-12). He believed that just as schooling could be used to enforce governability of a long-colonised people, so it could become a vehicle of intellectual liberation and, by extension, political freedom (Pearse 1916, *passim*). Some pedagogical choices were, in fact, political statements, an instance of this being the rule that the spoken language of the school was to be Irish, to be used instead of English in informal exchanges when students talked at games, among themselves or with the staff (Walsh 2007, 101).

St. Enda's, the first Catholic high school 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, William 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, and Rabindranath Tagore (Sisson 2003, 8).

The nationalists operating in the school context strove to achieve what Nicolls identified as the function of education, namely 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 a richer and nobler tradition to their descendants" (1910, 4). Counterbalancing the deliberate selectivity of the National Schools' curriculum, these nationalists tried to make Ireland's youth aware of its legends, songs, history, and literature to achieve a specific political goal – to instil in the youths "pride in the past and a sense of responsibility for the future of their country" (Nicolls 1910, 4).

Pearse's and his followers' endeavours within the school system were complemented by the activities led by sympathising nationalist groups in the realm of informal education. Cumman na nGaedheal[4] pledged its members to "advance the cause of Ireland's national independence" by cultivating Gaelic culture and providing physical education for the boys and girls of Ireland (Glandon 1985, 15; cf. also O'Hegarty 1922, 639). In the same years, the women of Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Gaelic for 'Daughters of Erin') were also in the forefront for what concerned

[4] 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.

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the interest in Ireland's young people. Inghinidhe na hÉireann was a women's nationalist group that included 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. Convinced that England "sought to weaken Ireland through its children" (*BnhÉ* Mar. 1911, 10), they manifested their interest in Irish youth in the efforts to instil in Ireland's boys and girls a pride for their distinct nationality, and by gearing all the activities of Inghinidhe na hÉireann towards the attainment of this goal.

These women lavished their enthusiasm and energies on the organisation of drama workshops, holding free classes in Irish language and folklore, including music and dancing, and promoting excursions to significant historic sites in the country[5] such as when girls' classes were taken to Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown (*BnhÉ* Jul. 1909, 8). The impact of these activities on the lives of Ireland's youth was celebrated by the sympathetic press: "The Inghinidhe na hÉireann, a society of women, founded nine years ago by Miss Maud Gonne", reads a 1909 article in *Bean na hÉireann*, "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". Here, the society's "incalculable good" should be intended as an allusion to the political efficaciousness of its activities in harnessing the young as a potential resource for the Irish nationalist movement. Its classes served not only as an outlet for the spare time of Dublin's children, but also as a recruiting ground for the future activists of the movement. In this regard, Inghinidhe na hÉireann appears to have been quite successful, as the article in *Bean na hÉireann* complimented the organisation on the fact that "hundreds of children have passed through their classes and are now working in the Nationalist Movement" (*BnhÉ* Jul. 1909, 8).

Nevertheless, these attempts at awakening Ireland's youth proved insufficient, no matter how popular they might have been individually. Exerting a tenacious hold on the imagination of Irish juveniles were also the British story papers such as the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Marvel*. Immensely popular, they came to be regarded as powerful *instrumenti*

[5] 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.

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regni because they perpetuated the glorious fiction of the Union that pictured Irish boys and girls as King Edward's own (Condon 1999, 22). Irish nationalists knew that, if they wanted to mould the builders of the future Ireland, they had to implement a concerted action that implicated all the sources of juvenile education: the school system, youth organisations and – last but not least – periodical publishing.

1.3. The Anglicising force of British story papers

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 promote the general amelioration of Irish youth as much as schooling. An insightful element in Pearse's speculation was the assertion that juvenile periodical literature had to be employed to spread particularised ideas about Irish nationalism in an agreeable manner. Still, when he first made these observations, Pearse had to face a desolating (for him) reality in this regard.

It has been mentioned that British magazines for juveniles were sources of considerable anxiety for the nationalists in the early twentieth century, who saw them as powerful and pervasive forces of Anglicisation. Indeed, the deluge of story papers streaming from British presses around 1900 looked unstoppable. Ireland was part of the British distributive system and juvenile reading material from London could boast wide circulation in the island, much to the nationalists' chagrin. In the article "The Return of the Fianna", published in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, one of the nationalists praised the education provided at St. Enda's because it gave the pupils the chance to become familiar with myths and legends they would not have been exposed to normally; in usual circumstances, they would have known "only 'Tom Brown', 'Dick Turpin' and 'Crusoe'", stories featured in British readings (27 Mar. 1909, 11; Walsh 2013, 155). The ever-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" with deleterious effects, as "they delight[ed] in the anecdotes of Alfred and the burnt cakes, of Canute bidding the waves retire, of Robert Bruce and the spider", but knew nothing of "every heroic figure from Ireland's history or literature" who were "kept from their ken" (1910, 7).

What these staunch nationalists claimed is confirmed by snippets from many memoirs or autobiographies of Irishmen born at the turn

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of the twentieth century, in which the authors recall reading English magazines in their adolescence, when many strands of the life of Irish youth were 'Anglicised', including sports and popular literature. In an oft-quoted passage of *Dublin Made Me* (1979), Cristopher Stephen Andrews remembers being taken to a review in the Castle to celebrate the King's birthday, together with all "the thousands who turned up to see it" – at the time, "Dublin was an English city", where English popular culture had a firm foothold. Together with his friends, Andrews was used to reading leisure material that was distinctly British and imperialist in flavour, as he recalled 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 [...]. 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. (Andrews 1979, 45; cf. also 58)

The appeal of a separate Irish identity was not yet felt by young Andrews, the very same teenager who would later take part in the War of Independence as a military activist in the Irish Republican Army. In retrospect, it sounds ironic that a key figure in the nationalist movement is today best-known by his nickname 'Todd', which he acquired because of his perceived resemblance to a character in the British story paper *The Magnet*: the affluent Greyfriars schoolboy Alonzo Todd (Andrews 1979, 48).

Pronouncements about unexpected formative readings are very common in the memoirs of the protagonists of the struggle for national self-determination. The paradox of Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century was that, while the nationalists were becoming more confident of its cultural distinction, the country was becoming more deeply entwined with British culture. Even Michael Collins, in his youth, was a dedicated and voracious reader of canonical authors of Victorian England, such as William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens, and of juvenile magazines (English 2006, 303).

Interesting observations on the subject were voiced by writer Frank O'Connor in the autobiographical *An Only Child* (1961). Here, the author casts light on the cultural dislocation, self-negation, and alienation experienced – albeit unconsciously – by the Irish young readers of the early twentieth century as he recalls, on the one hand, how his early childhood was saturated with imperial fictions and, on the other, how he felt that his spiritual fatherland was England, for it was the home

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of all the imaginary friends whom he encountered in magazines such as *The Gem* and *The Magnet* (O'Connor 2005, chaps. 10 and 13; cf. Condon 2000, 190). Janette Condon offers us an insightful analysis on O'Connor feelings of cultural ambivalence, as she explains:

> 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'. (2000, 192)

The items of the alien culture gradually became natural aspects of the boy's personal horizon, with detrimental consequences on his outlook on reality. What happened in his native "Cork seemed somehow unworthy", because "it was never spoken of nor written about in schools nor in books" and this, in turn, helped to build the "self-negating disjunction between the world of his imagination and daily Irish reality" (Condon 2000, 192).

The watershed in O'Connor's life was the encounter with Daniel Corkery, a teacher who sparked the then 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 Cuchulainn sagas and, later, by joining the Gaelic League in the aftermath of 1916 (Kiberd 1996, 98).

It is noteworthy that Daniel Corkery, Frank O'Connor's "first love", wrote scathing remarks 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 youth was not facilitated to "understand both himself and his surroundings". Sadly, Ireland was then lacking "a national literature written primarily for its own people" (Corkery [1931] 1966, 2). This absence deeply affected the imagination and life of Irish people, entailing more deleterious outcomes in the case of the young. 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:

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> 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. [...] 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 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. (Corkery [1931] 1966, 14-15)

How could the boys and girls of Ireland fight for their country if they perceived their surroundings as "unvital", secondary? Their minds were not prejudiced against England, not even against imperialism.

Magazines like *The Gem* and *The Magnet* posed a threat to Irish nationalism for multiple reasons: first, the imperialist thrust of much content could not be easily reconciled with nationalist ideology. Irish nationalists often directed their resentment against people like Alfred Harmsworth, the press baron who controlled numerous juvenile publications, because in their media they endeavoured to strengthen the young's belief in the imperial mission. Harmsworth was described by the Irish nationalist press as an "evil genius" like the cursed Cromwell – he was given the infamous title of "the Cromwell of journalese" – because he promoted a "healthy Imperial outlook" among young Irish readers by way of his story papers (*Irishman* 8 Dec. 1917, 4; *Nationality* 24 Jul. 1915, 5; cf. Novick 2001, 45 and 51). In the magazines for boys published by the Amalgamated Press, the contributors were never weary of encouraging "physical strength, patriotism, interest in travel and exploration, and pride in the empire" through the fictional medium (Howarth 1973, 89).

The nationalists resented the fact that this type of fiction, created for the British leisure market, was made available to Irish boys and girls. It was deemed easy for the Irish youthful readers to become Empire-

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worshippers when gorging on the periodical literature coming from Britain. In 1901, an anonymous contributor to the *United Irishman* argued that the Irish boys were "essentially hero-worshippers", prone to identify themselves with the man of action. George A. Henty was quoted as the author "whose influence is most damaging", because he always held up the Englishman as a model, with countless references to his patriotism, glorious heritage, and "civilising mission" (qtd. in Frehan 2012, 42; Coldrey 1988, 124).

Even more problematic was the role given to Ireland and the Irish in these imperial fictions for juveniles. 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 characters in Henty's *Orange and Green*, *In the Irish Brigade*, *With Moore at Corunna* and *Under Wellington's Command*, while many of William Kingston's 'midshipman' stories of the imperial navy, such as *Paddy Finn* and the *Heir of Kilfinnan*, include Irish characters (Condon 1999, 206). From the point of view of Irish nationalists, one problematic aspect was that these stories often stereotypically depicted Irish characters as hot-tempered and prone to guerrilla fighting. Even more problematic was the fact that this Irish propensity to guerrilla warfare would soon be pictured as acceptable, provided it was carried out in his Majesty's service rather than in resistance to it. The hot-tempered Irish were described as vessels of physical prowess that could be exploited for the defence of the Empire when the latter faced opponents from without.

The number of authors who portrayed controversial (in the nationalists' view) Irish characters included Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Best known for creating the character of Sherlock Holmes, in his vast literary production Doyle explored Irish themes and dealt with the Irish Question in stories such as *That Little Square Box*, *The Heiress of Glenmahowley*, and *The Green Flag*. In the latter, first published in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in January 1895, readers encountered a complicated and ambiguous image of the Irish. Doyle, himself of Anglo-Irish descent, lingered on the cultural and 'racial' difference between the English and the Irish, but still suggested that differences could be accommodated and utilized by the imperial rule (Siddiqi 2012, 96).

Rough, surly Irish rogues populate *The Green Flag*, which tells the story of Private Dennis Connolly who joins the British Army and leaves for Sudan with his new regiment. The republican and hot-tempered Connolly, whose "hot Celtic blood seethed with hatred against Britain and all things British", fits in beautifully with his comrades of the Royal Mallows, likewise "dry-rotted with treason and with bitter hatred of the

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flag under which they served" (Doyle 1900, 14 and 2). These are hardly promising recruits, especially Connolly who soon becomes an instigator of trouble and stubbornly refuses to obey the British officers' orders. Yet the latter are confident that the Irish recruits will make resolute soldiers believing that their frustration with the Empire could be marshalled against Britain's enemies. They are right: the Irish proto-Fenians initially foment mutiny but rally to the cause when they witness the diabolical force of the Mahdi's Dervishes attacking the British (Glazzard 2015, 168). Significantly, the first to change his mind is Connolly, who unites the Irish contingent, leads it to the defence of the Empire, and eventually dies after saving the day in an act of selfless heroism.

This plot twist betrays a concern about the political cohesiveness of imperial rules, here toned down by showing how the Irish will spontaneously realign themselves with the English if asked to join forces by playing on their innate aggressiveness (Siddiqi 2012, 94). The racial difference of the Irish that made them reckless and brutal may come in handy in the propagation and defence of the imperial project. The moral is encapsulated in the following passage:

> 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. (Doyle 1900, 4)

Besides the imperialist content, the nationalists had much more to complain about British magazines. If boys ended up dreaming about the imperial enterprise, girls were deceived 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 targets of an article published in *Bean na hÉireann* in 1909 which deplored the "deluge of trashy foreign literature in Ireland". What the contributors mostly abhorred was not so much the fact that this cheap literature was "published and printed in England", but "the English atmosphere" it contained. It subtly inculcated "the false and mean standard of life" of the English, which they saw as "the real evil". The outcries of *Bean na hÉireann* are indicative of a general trend to protect the morality of "young Irish women", who were at this time confronted with "the paltry ideals" set out by English literature for girls; the depravity of the English was evident in the stories

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depicting "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" (*BnhÉ* Apr. 1909, 8; cf. also May 2012, 158).

The nationalists' resentment is apparent in the extracts above. In fact, it was so strong as to spur them to reply by producing their own story papers, which finally emerged 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 nationalist fervour and the literature for children and youths popular at the time (403-418). This was the case in Ireland. The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a cultural and political nationalist revival that coincided with the appearance of a new crop of periodicals intended for juveniles, decidedly nationalistic in tone and subject.

1.4. First attempts in the battle against British periodicals

Nationalist writers pertinaciously insisted on the need for "de-Anglicising" fictions and periodicals, creating a sense amongst many other nationalists that Irish boys and girls needed to be viewed as primary actors in the resistance to cultural and political imperialism in early-twentieth-century Ireland. Soon the consensus over the subject translated into actions, but the nationalists' earliest attempts were not crowned with success. The establishment of home-made periodicals was a daunting task that demanded careful preparation, editorial expertise, and time. A step-by-step process appears to have been inevitable.

To begin with, columns dedicated to young readers were included in periodicals for adults, paving the way for the creation of truly Irish periodicals for juveniles. For instance, the monthly *Irish Freedom* was a publication aimed at an adult audience, but it featured a column for readers under twenty entitled *The Sunroom of Youth*. In the same years, the *Weekly Independent* published the fixture "Éire Óg" with Seanmháthair ('Grandmother') at its helm (Nic Congáil 2009, 114); *Bean na hÉireann* launched a column dedicated to Irish girls; and the *Weekly Freeman* inaugurated *The Fireside Club* for its readers' children. The column in *Bean na hÉireann* was entitled *An Grianán* and was written under the pseudonym Dectora by Madeleine ffrench-Mullen, the co-founder of St Ultan's Hospital for Infants (Hay 2012, 155), while the *Irish Fireside*

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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 supplying the Gaelic League with several young language enthusiasts who had familiarised themselves with the study of the Irish language, history, and literature by reading the column (Nic Congáil 2009, 91).

These columns shared some distinctive characteristics exemplified by *Irish Freedom*'s *The Sunroom of Youth*, which presents all the major defining characteristics of this editorial fixture, which later served as a blueprint for the subsequent attempts at establishing a full periodical for juveniles.

The Sunroom of Youth was written by a woman under the pseudonym of Neasa, who aimed to make youths aware of the cultural separateness of Ireland, as such awareness was deemed conducive, by the nationalists, to the kindling of political separatist feelings in the young readership. Nationalist anti-British feelings were expressed with no reticence at all. For instance, many articles in *The Sunroom of Youth* were devoted to condemning the King's visit to Ireland, on the basis that 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 – have no claim whatever on anything but the contempt and detestation of the Irish people" (*IF* Jul. 1911, 3).

The goal was national independence and its attainment was dependent on the strength of the commitment of the country's youth. The editors and contributors of *Irish Freedom* clearly feared the youngsters' indifference to Ireland's regrettable lot. In "An Appeal to the Younger Readers of *Irish Freedom*", the editor denounced that their "indifference [...] to the political servitude which oppresses their country is a serious feature of Irish life" – he lamented 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" (*IF* Dec. 1911, 7).

This scenario had to be averted at all costs, 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'" (*IF* Jun. 1912, 3). In her first article in *The Sunroom of Youth*, Neasa outlined the work ahead and asserted her trust in Irish youths,

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> 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. (*IF* Dec. 1910, 6)

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 further purposes: first, by offering the participants a book prize, the competition organisers prompted 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, "on which an examination [wa]s held for the Third Class Test. Much difficulty has been experienced 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" (*IF* Jun. 1914, 2). Second, by publishing the winning essays, Neasa and *Irish Freedom* fostered the potential of boys and girls to become nationalist propagandists themselves by imitation. 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 [...] form hurling Clubs and join the Gaelic League" (*IF* Jun. 1912, 3).

The column dedicated to the youths in *Bean na hÉireann* and the one tilted *Fireside Club* were in many respects similar to *The Sunroom of Youth*. More importantly, *The Sunroom of Youth* and the columns dedicated to young readers in *Bean na hÉireann* and the *Weekly Freeman* supplied the formula for truly Irish story papers that could compete with their British, and more established, counterparts. These short, engaging reads imbued with inspirational feelings of nationalism paved the way for juvenile periodicals that would similarly champion nationalist values.

The first decades of the twentieth century saw many transient attempts to promote a nationalist periodical literature for the young, but it was only with the publication of the first issue of *Our Boys* that these efforts began to pay off. One of the earliest attempts at a full home-grown substitute for the examples of British popular culture was made by Patrick Pearse. Pearse founded a college paper, *An Macaomh* ('The Young'), which denoted an earnest commitment to national self-

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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 the school. In Pearse's plans, it was to be published twice yearly, at mid-summer and at Christmas: in fact, the publication was discontinuous due to financial problems. *An Macaomh* was kept slumbering for two years, as 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 [6], and illustrations from pen-and-ink drawings by Jack B. Yeats, William's brother. In the introductory "By Way of Comment", Pearse expressed the hope that the periodical would eventually 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. (*AM* Nodlaig 1909, 12)

Unfortunately, *An Macaomh* was short-lived: its discontinuous publication run ended abruptly in May 1913, by which few issues had been published.

Concomitant with Pearse's editorial effort was also a number of manuscript papers. Some of them appeared and disappeared during the publication runs of *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's*. From the correspondence page of *St. Enda's*, we learn that an overabundance of manuscript papers was produced in the revolutionary days, including one titled *Ag Gabhail Timpal*. This was "a manuscript magazine, the objects of which are to bring Gaels into touch with each other, encourage the use of the Irish language, and promote discussion of matters affecting literary, social, and Irish Ireland work" (*SE* Jul. 1919, 286).

As is often the case, whatever their provenance, most of these magazines were short-lived. 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. Circulation was a further issue for publications printed on cheap paper and with paper, rather than cardboard, covers. Even if their circulation fig-

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

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ures cannot be known, we gather that these papers were unable to acquire a steady readership. The absence of a comprehensive list is easily explained in that much of this production has been irretrievably lost.

Not only this: the reconstruction of the genealogy and development of manuscript papers is an arduous task, further complicated by the general lack of information about the key people connected with these editorial enterprises. The primary sources of information available are letters and comments published in more established papers. From these, we gather that manuscript papers, far from occupying a place of importance on the Irish periodical scene in the 1910s-1920s, were deemed pleonastic. Regarding *Ag Gabhail Timpal*, *St. Enda's* commented that there was "really nothing new in it from beginning to end – nothing that cannot be found in the Irish Ireland newspapers and reviews". The efforts of the "hard-working" "patriotic" editor were commendable but vain, as "the public reached by his Magazine [wa]s already converted" (*SE* Aug. 1919, 303).

The remarks in *St. Enda's* may be dismissive about the reputation of manuscript papers, relegating them to the side-lines of the editorial panorama, but, to the contemporary scholar, the presence of manuscript papers attests to both the vitality of the Irish publishing scene in the revolutionary years and the difficulties that did not spare even the most iron-willed editors attempting to establish a popular magazine for juveniles. It was a gruelling task: nationalist Ireland was stifled in its attempts to create an autonomous periodical tradition by British competition, censorship, material obstacles, and the difficulties in finding an adequate compromise between *docere* and *delectare*.

As will be articulated in the following chapter, only those magazines that were able to achieve a precarious balance between political and market interests, censorship and available resources, managed to conquer a regular readership and have an impact on their readers' lives. With various degrees of success, these were *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's*, which emerged in the evolving editorial landscape of the 1910s in the wake of multiple earlier attempts. With their rise, leisure reading became an increasingly powerful sphere of influence on public opinion, which proved crucial in modelling the next generation of Irish men and women by ensuring the 'informal' character training of current Irish boys and girls.

These cheap periodicals promulgated nationalist values and fostered the cause of the de-Anglicisation of the country by waging a battle of images and words against their British counterparts. Their contributors faced the challenge of laying the foundations of a new state which, they hoped, would not merely deliver national independence, but champion nationalist values.

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2.
Striving for an 'Autonomous' Production

> Heaven knows it was badly wanted to combat the *Union Jack* and other boys' 'rags' we get from the other side.
>
> *The Dublin Saturday Post* May 1917

> Never spend a penny on the demoralizing stuff brought to Ireland in the shape of stories and boys' papers.
>
> *Our Boys* Oct. 1914, 42-43

> "Our Boys" was published by the Irish Christian Brothers and was the only "paper" I was allowed to select and purchase for myself.
>
> Thomas Hevey, Adjutant IRA, May 1919-1921

2.1. The new crop of periodicals at a glance: their Janus-faced nature

The examples of *An Macaomh* and the manuscript papers demonstrate to what extent establishing a popular magazine was an arduous task for the Irish nationalists. A number of different factors converged in the early decades of the twentieth century to make Ireland a vital but unsympathetic location for the launch of their editorial enterprises. Enthusiasm and determination propelled action but did not always make up for the lack of business expertise. The editors toiled to offer reading material that defined an Irish popular culture resolutely different from British models and, at the same time, proved attractive to youthful audiences.

The four periodicals meant to win the youths' hearts to spread the ideology of the faction they represented among as many future nation builders as possible. Their editors were pretty aware that the principal facts and notions had to be imparted in an easy and agreeable manner, to make "a lively, attractive, Irish Magazine" out of their periodical (*YI* 1 Apr. 1917, 1). An entreating package would seduce vast audiences and entice them into more strident ideological works. '*Docere* and *delectare*' was the leading doctrine to instil a sense of Irish national identity

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and belonging into the psyche of the young generation of Irish citizens, but it did not always inform the contents of the periodicals (Louvet and Mikowski 2020, 2). Being aware of an issue does not necessarily imply being able to tackle it.

And the path to survival and success was further complicated by British competition and the contingencies of the years when these periodicals came into existence. Irish editorial enterprises were bound up with the political decisions taken in England and concurrent historical events. If there was one main phenomenon that defined Ireland's print culture of the early twentieth century, it was the outbreak of the First World War, which deeply affected both the material production and the contents of the periodicals.

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

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. For example, in December 1914, the British government suppressed *Éire*, *Sinn Féin*, *Irish Freedom*, and the *Irish Worker* (Johnson 2003, 34), because they had started anti-war propagandistic campaigns against their British counterparts. In the later months, the same destiny fell upon papers like the nationalist *Scissors and Paste* and the labourite *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 by Major Bryce Cooper, placed Irish newspapers under 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 it was strictly forbidden to publish seditious reading material and other matters which could demoralise people. Until 1921, newspapers and periodicals with separatist sympathies suffered the consequences of these strict regulations (Glandon 1985, 159-160). Not even the periodicals for juveniles were

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spared. Towards the end of the First World War, the editor of *St. Enda's* was "ruthlessly taken from those who loved and revered him, and cast into prison in the land of the Gall" (*SE* Oct. 1918, 98). He must have got used to it, because in May 1923, the periodical announced that he had been arrested a second time "because of his faith in the old cause" (*SE* May 1923, 14).

Juvenile magazines also suffered the material limitations brought about by the total conflict. Evidence is contained in this notice from *Our Boys*, which is also illustrative of the ethos of mutual support obtaining in the milieu of the nationalist press:

> 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? (*OB* Jan. 1918, 123)

The cooperation between editors and journalists of different magazines was a way to partially overcome the obstacles that made publishing difficult. When they came into existence, Irish periodicals could rely on a ready-made association with other periodicals of a similar kind (Tilley 2020, 144). The Irish publishing scene was governed by relationships of interdependence, which manifested themselves in exchanges of favours. Monthlies and weeklies, intended for both young and adult readerships, frequently 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 (Novick 2002, 36) [1]. For instance, *Our Boys* hailed the establishment of *Young Ireland* in 1917 with enthusiasm, demanding its readers' agency to do their "best" "to push the sale of *Eire Og*". *Our Boys* and *Young Ireland* were associate magazines sharing at least one objective: "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" (*YI* 26 May 1917, 3; cf. also *SE* May 1918).

To a certain degree, the act of mutual double publication was a means to wittily get into print. It is also revealing of the Janus-faced

[1] There is a notable exception: during the First World War, *Fianna* buried in a welter of heavy-handed sarcasm the pro-enlistment activities of *Our Boys*. The subject is investigated in chapter three.

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nature of the periodical as a publishing genre. The image of the Roman god with two faces is appropriate to describe the essential dual quality of periodicals, on which opposite competing forces exert their pressure (Rössler 2020). Irish juvenile periodicals were torn by dialectic tensions between pleasure and instruction, closure and openness, political and market interests. Each periodical's issue can be read as a self-contained text, "a free-standing unity" in a series that offered a recognisable position to its readers (Beetham 1989, 99); nonetheless, it can be viewed as part of a wider publishing scene with which establishing a dialogic relationship, as seen with the cases of cooperation between editors and magazines. These periodicals were part of a wide network that extended to include other media, but also external institutions and sponsors financially supporting them.

Nationalist periodicals were vehicles of resistance or critique against the political order, but such resistance was complicated by their need to be financially viable (Beetham 2015, 325). Political interests had to be tempered with market interests. As previously stated, the contents of the periodical were given a fashionable entreating packaging to meet the taste of a capricious audience used to devouring British magazines. Therefore, although aiming at defining an Irish culture that differed sharply from the British, the editors and contributors wisely retained, from the successful tradition of British story magazines, the subjects and components which had proved to whet the desire of a youthful readership. Competition was hard and the editors, expert and inexpert alike, went all-out 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. These were all elements that could be found in British magazines as well.

Second, the pressures exerted by market interests are evidenced by the pre-eminence of advertising in the periodicals. At the time, each periodical issue was enveloped in advertising wrappers and ads were featured also inside. Extensive advertisements ran parallel to the articles, fictional pieces, and cartoons, and their content was consonant with the nationalist values and convictions of editors and publishers. Besides being revealing documents about contemporary commodity culture, the adverts cast light on the embedded ideology of these publications.

Advertisers used to define themselves and their products in terms of 'Irishness', which they displayed through the accurate choice of slogans resonating with explicit nationalistic rhetoric, the visual parade of all the paraphernalia of Gaelic iconography – harps, wolfhounds, towers (Kiberd 1996, 101) – and "Gaelic-looking", old-fashioned font and typography.

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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" (Strachan and Nally 2012, 11-12). Nonetheless, their self-representation fitted in well with the campaigns for economic renewal endorsed by the story papers and their autarchic protectionist drives.

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" (2014, 12). Scorn towards those selling and buying foreign goods was 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 that found verbal expression in a series of patriotic calls. 'Buying Irish' was conceived and represented as a way of 'de-Anglicising' the country and resisting the pervasiveness of British imported goods. The home-productions of periodicals and wares were facets of the same anti-British, de-Anglicising scheme. The campaigns for buying Irish products and reading Irish literature – either popular or highbrow – can be all interpreted as parts of a many-sided campaign against imported forms of expression and production, which was in favour of what was perceived as the authentic heritage of Ireland.

The juvenile periodicals in this book's corpus were not mere containers of discrete bits of information or aggregations of components, but "rich, dialogic texts" in which each item interacted with the others to form a coherent cultural object (Latham and Scholes 2006, 518 and 528). So, for example, the message in one editorial was repeated through an advert; alternatively, throughout the same number, non-fictional writings could be strikingly similar in structure, language, and topics to the fictional pieces. These were all strategies employed by editors and contributors to disseminate specific ideas, buttress a nationalist agenda, and survive in the difficult world of the Irish publishing scene.

However, despite sharing numerous similarities, each periodical for juveniles had its own editorial identity. For this reason, the following sections are devoted to exploring the facets of the twofold, Janus-faced nature of the periodicals intended for juveniles, through detailed remarks on the origins and main characteristics of each one.

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The division into dedicated subchapters provides a unique opportunity to present in full details some useful source material for the tumultuous years between 1916 and 1922 that has seldom come under close scholarly analysis. Moreover, notwithstanding the kind of division adopted in the next subsections, frequent comparisons are made between the four periodicals to shed light, on the one hand, on the relationship of interdependence between the publications and, on the other, on how they all contributed to creating a diversified section of the Irish periodical press.

2.2. "Our Boys": a compound of Catholicism and Irishness

The examination of the periodicals composing the corpus cannot but begin with a focus on the genesis and development of *Our Boys*, a monthly that has attracted considerable scholarly interest in recent years. Michael Flanagan has devoted several studies to the subject, starting with an analysis of the construction of masculinity in *Our Boys*, which was the focus of his own PhD dissertation in 2006. This study was further enriched by a couple of articles of his own illustrating to what extent *Our Boys* can be instrumental to shed a light on the Irish Christian Brothers' endorsement to several forms of nationalist assertion in the early decades of the twentieth century – a kind of support nonetheless counterbalanced by the firm assertion of distinct Catholic social and cultural mores. Furthermore, Flanagan has convincingly traced the evolution in the editorial policy of the magazine from the support for Redmond's constitutionalist battle for Home Rule to that for separatist nationalism, connecting this evolution to the shifts in the political stance of the Christian Brothers (cf. Flanagan 2002; 2006). Recently, the historian Dáire Keogh has 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 be both a rich source for intellectual inquiry and a privileged vantage point on Irish culture and history (Keogh 2015).

Admittedly, part of the interest in this periodical derives from the historical importance, in Ireland, of the Christian Brothers, namely the editors and publishers of *Our Boys*. Founded in 1803 by Edmund Rice, the Irish 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

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the students for the Intermediate Examinations and the admission tests to access a career in the Civil Service or other administrative roles in banks and insurance companies. This practical, no-nonsensical approach to schooling emerged in the pages of *Our Boys*. Some numbers featured advertisements of grind schools, while a column was always devoted to the preparation to the Intermediate Examinations. And essays and questions were provided to students for practice.

History was paramount in their educational mission, and they devoted much energy to its teaching, which took a peculiar form. The Christian Brothers had implemented a history syllabus and a 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" (Flanagan 2002, 46). The Christian Brothers wrote and published their own textbooks, which 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 (Coldrey 1988, 57). The stress 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 this 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. (qtd. in Coldrey 1988, 121) [2]

The acknowledgement of the Christian Brothers' educational efforts substantiate the impression that Irish children's education was a critical site of cultural and political contestation throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when different actors competed for the control of the allegiance of Ireland's youth. Garnering the youngsters' allegiance was deemed so important by the Christian Brothers that, in the 1910s, they decided to add a new weapon to their educational armoury: they entered the market of magazines intended for juveniles with their

[2] Needless to say, objections were raised as to the teaching of history of the Brothers 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?" (qtd. in Augusteijn 2002, 114).

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home-grown periodical. The magazine, titled *Our Boys*, was to appear for the first time in September 1914.

The germinal ideal that led to the publication of *Our Boys* can be detected in an article written by Brother P.J. Hennessy for *The Christian Brothers' Educational Record* of 1914. It focused on the proposal for a new magazine for the entertainment and education of Ireland's youthful 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:

> 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. (qtd. in Coldrey 1988, 63)

The adjective "clean" used by Brother Hennessy was the keyword around which all the Christian Brothers' discourses and initiatives revolved, and it is deeply reflective of the conservative clerics' concern with the Irish success of British story papers, which were identified as sources of potential corruption. To thwart the success of the "demoralizing" British magazines in Ireland (*OB* Oct. 1914, 42-43), the Christian Brothers aimed to concoct a periodical that stirred the youthful nationalism of its readers in a sanctioned, "clean" form, as the nationalist content was to be framed within the teachings of conservative Catholic education.

Since its inception, *Our Boys* portrayed itself as the main weapon in the armoury of Catholic nationalists, reporting favourable acknowledgements from the highest ranks in the clergy just as it did when, in the very first number, it solemnly declared to have been born under the aegis of Pope Pius X[3].

> 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

[3] 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 Pope Benedict XV. Five numbers later, the editors requested "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".

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> 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. (*OB* Sept. 1914, 1)

Through *Our Boys*, the *corps d'armée* of the revival (MacDonagh 1983, 114) expressed their desire to see the process for Ireland's national self-determination developing along Catholic and truly Irish lines. This implied cultural protectionism, in which the Christian Brothers excelled. In their view, Catholicism and Irishness had to permeate all the facets of the Irish youths' lives. Their concern was not simply with doctrine, but also with social behaviour, which they deemed deeply affected by foreign, English influences (Lyons 1960, 154). The anglicising force of the 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.

Through *Our Boys*, the Christian Brothers endeavoured to rein in those corrupting tides. 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 [*Our Boys*] set its face firmly against the popular culture of which it was a part" (2011, 20), 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 threats of modernity were consequences of the British presence in Ireland, as the alien culture brought in metropolitan values and mores.

Consequently, *Our Boys* promoted a vision of the world for the young in direct opposition to that of metropolitan culture, which was perceived as 'unIrish': for the Christian Brothers and other conservative clerics, the city was a place of temptation and moral danger. The sensuous 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 (Flanagan 2006, 7). Authentic Ireland, that is the heart of the country, was to be found far from the metropolis, specifically in the isolated lands of the Celtic Fringe. During the Revival, as Seamus Deane 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" (1997, 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" (1983, 57). Exemplifying

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Gellner's insights, the contributors to *Our Boys* used regional themes to appeal to their young audience, constructing a romanticised regional identity related to the Celtic Fringes of the British Isles. In line with their nostalgia for the authentic Ireland, the contributors to *Our Boys* celebrated the West of the country in serials like *Kitty the Hare's Stories*, which provided an identity as Other to English industrial urbanism. Initiated by Victor O'Donovan 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 (Keogh 2015, 703).

In the fictional representations of *Our Boys*, 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" (Whelan 1993, 42). 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 this region. 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 (Duffy 1997, 68).

This proves that *Our Boys* was open and receptive to the ideas circulating among other nationalist groups and organisations of the time. It belonged to a network that included additional Catholic institutions similarly engaged in a crusade against urban and British culture. Before the establishment of the Irish Free State, various groups or individuals 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 explicit objective of preventing the circulation of noxious publications (Adams 1968, 15). The Association launched campaigns and an "enrolment crusade" that garnered the support of the Christian Brothers and *Our Boys*. The 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" through which they could help the Association, i.e. volunteering to raise funds by selling

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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" (*OB* 10 Nov. 1927, 13).

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 writings in *Our Boys* often dealt with historical subjects in a peculiar fashion that deserves attention and further remarks. The contributors of historical fictional narratives wrote in the wake of A.M. Sullivan, whose 1867 bestseller *The Story of Ireland* was still advertised in the pages of their periodical almost fifty years after the release of 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" (Sullivan 1867, 7). Drawing on Ireland's oral tradition, Sullivan 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" (1867, 7; cf. Foster 2001, 3-8). The focus is often on events of national struggles – retold 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 into thin air "like the baseless fabric of a vision" (Sullivan 1867, 356). 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" (58).

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 (Foster 2001, 9). The fictional writings of *Our Boys* 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 the youths' responsibilities towards their country, recur, for instance, in this excerpt, 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

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> 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 in the footsteps of your fathers so faithfully that your names may be handed down to posterity, as the worthy sons of noble sires. (*OB* Sept. 1914, 32-33)

The passage is noteworthy, first, because it constitutes evidence of the investment in Irish youths. The proof is encapsulated in the explicit statement that it was the boys, 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.

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 *Boy's 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 of this time.

In certain respects, with the distribution of *Our Boys* the Christian Brothers may also be said to have filled a lacuna in the wide-ranging publishing scene 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 several 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 published 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*'s, counteract the success of "trashy novels, novelettes and magazines from a penny upwards, with which the country was flooded at the present day" (*TCTA* 1905, 31)[4]. The society would

[4] According to Michael Adams, the Society's principal objects were (1) to disseminate among Catholics good cheap literature; (2) to assist uneducated or badly instructed

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become really successful only in Independent Ireland. As detailed in the 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 (de Cléir 2017, 2-3; cf. also Brown 2004, 69). 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 *Boy's 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 accounts of saints' lives and famous pilgrimages.

The main 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 readers into more blatant 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: first, they set a price that made the purchase affordable for the lower classes – 1 penny. A further limitation to their attempt to acquire a large mass of potential readers could have been a kind of content not palatable to young readers, a limitation overcome by the contributors' effort to frame 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" (2011, 20). Although denigrating the "demoralizing" British story papers (*OB* Oct. 1914, 43), from that tradition they sensibly took the employment of suspense, mystery, tight episodic plotting, the old tricks of passion and fancy, and crime subjects.

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 penned by Mrs Margaret T. Pender – she

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Catholics to a better knowledge of their religion; and (3) to combat the pernicious influence of infidel and immoral publications by circulation of good, cheap and popular Catholic literature (1968, 19).

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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.

By writing about Cromwell, the contributors to *Our Boys* conveniently tapped into an inexhaustible reservoir of maledictions around the figure of Irish history's arch-villain. At the same time, they reversed pre-established assumptions about the Early Modern Age, which was a popular setting for the stories featured in British papers. However, if, in the latter case, this historic period stood out as a time of equality, justice, and prosperity – with Tudor England portrayed as an ideal and lost world, where honest simplicity prevailed (Howkins and Dyck 1987, 25-26) –, 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. At the level of metafiction, the serial draws on the trope of heroic seafaring, so prominent in British boys' reading at the turn of the century, but with an important element of difference. In *'Neath the Banners of Spain and Ireland*, the main allies of the Irish are the Catholic Spaniards, the arch-rivals of the English, who were often depicted in the role of antagonists in the British story papers (Boyd 2003, 54-57), whereas the true villains are the English – not the noble corsairs of the romantic era, but cynical and cruel adventurers. In O'Mullane's serial, the bellicose Elizabethan mariners celebrated in works like Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855) [5] give way to brutal and savage men exuding cruelty. The English are led by Smith who is always depicted while torturing his prisoners, throwing them into the fangs of a devil-fish, and slaughtering the protagonist's Irish family (*OB* Jun. 1915, 263-264).

In their historical adventure tales like *'Neath the Banners of Spain and Ireland*, the contributors to *Our Boys* strove to emphasise the bravery and endurance of heroic Irish boys, even against a more powerful,

[5] *Our Boys* was highly critical of Charles Kingsley's works. In the 1916 February issue, readers were reminded to "avoid anti-Irish, anti-Catholic books like the overpraised boys' stories of Kingsley" (*OB* Feb. 1916, 168).

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better-equipped, and even violent enemy. O'Mullane's serial sets the English against the Irish as a foil, insisting on their moral opposition. This is the logic deployed 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 (cf. Gibbons 2011). Given the distinctive Catholic quality of the Christian Brothers' nationalism, it comes as no surprise that the adversities faced by the tales' protagonists were 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 (Flanagan 2006, 189-190).

Much more unpredictable is the fact that the commercially minded Christian Brothers did not refrain from publishing 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 (Russell 1999, 15). 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 the villains get their retribution. Hardly were these refashioned cowboys' stories deleterious for the Irish youngsters' minds, 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" (*OB* Jun. 1917, 124).

The Christian Brothers enacted multiple strategies to whet the desires of their readership and make *Our Boys* a successful periodical. *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 advertising. The periodical was widely advertised and would-be readers were also enticed by the billing of new

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serials by favourite authors: indeed, *Our Boys* published serials "chockfull of thrills that follow one another in rapid succession" (*OB* 18 Aug. 1927, 850).

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 (1988, 27), but also Flanagan and Keogh have positively stated that 40,000 were actively buying *Our Boys*, and agreed that many more readers were available as a potential audience for the hardcover volumes. After all, the editors of *Our Boys* themselves made similar calculations in messages published in the earlier issues of the monthly (*OB* Oct. 1914, 43). 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 (*OB* Apr. 1915, 215; Feb. 1916, 171).

Nor did the periodical fail to portray itself as a terrific commercial success, often reporting positive selling figures and stating that the 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 (*OB* Christmas Number 1915). In August, they published this 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" (*OB* Aug. 1916, 347). And, in January 1918, the Editorial Notes included the announcement 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". (*OB* Jan. 1918, 123)

Overall, this was a long success story punctuated with editorial achievements for the Christian Brothers. Only on one occasion, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter, the monthly did not live up to its standards.

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In a publishing scene where the failure rate was very high, *Our Boys* stood out as a long-lived periodical, lasting as much as the consensus and cultural discourse it exemplified. It ceased publication in 1990, when unable to make a successful transition to the demands of the new millennium; it no longer met the needs of an ever-changing audience which now favoured other kinds of cultural commodities.

2.3. "Fianna": the story paper of the Irish Boy Scouts

Several journals had challenged *Our Boys* in its heyday, among which was *Fianna*. *Our Boys* and *Fianna* shared many similarities, but the two periodicals are very fascinating because of their differences.

Fianna was founded in 1915 by a few able, and until that time obscure, fervent ex-Boy Scouts with publicistic ambitions. The group included Percy Reynolds and Patsy O'Connor – who suddenly died in 1915 of wounds he received two years earlier during the 1913 Lockout – and others of lesser reputation. These young men all shared a nationalist stance on Irish politics and the membership in the Irish National Boy Scout organisation, called Na Fianna Éireann in Gaelic. More precisely, the paper they founded, *Fianna*, was designed to mirror and popularise the principles of the republican scout society.

Na Fianna Éireann 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" (*FH* 1914, 12). Every boy joining the Irish National Boy Scouts had to make a solemn promise to devote all his energy to carrying this 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 Éireann 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 this 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

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> 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. (*FH* 1914, 14-15)

It was to publicize these aims and objectives that Na Fianna Éireann members 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 organisation and its founder, the Belfast-born Bulmer Hobson.

The latter might have been also a sort of mentor for O'Connor and Reynolds. Hobson devoted a 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 of his would follow, among which the establishment of a short-lived progenitor of Na Fianna Éireann in Belfast, also called Na Fianna Éireann; but due to lack of money and other impediments, the Belfast organisation soon ceased to exist. Then, the project was resumed thanks to the stamina of Markievicz in 1909, when Hobson joined the Countess in establishing a new version of Na Fianna Éireann – this time in Dublin and with an explicit nationalist agenda. The new organisation was indeed conceived as a nationalist response to the original Boy Scout movement founded by Robert Baden-Powell the previous year (Hay 2015, 103-104) [6].

[6] The notion of "countering" Baden-Powell's movement is not irrelevant. I have found multiple allusions to Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts in the periodicals examined here, and although they were unconnected, most of them made fun of the British youth organisation and its founder. Interestingly, beneath the veil of irony, 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

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Presumably with Hobson's tacit support, in December 1914, O'Connor and Reynolds took the initiative to produce "a one-off Christmas annual" entitled *Nodlaeg na Bhfiann* ('The Fianna Christmas'); though not an official publication of Na Fianna Éireann, this magazine of sixteen pages was welcomed by the general headquarters of the organisation, including Hobson (May 2015, 110). Hobson, also a prolific writer and editor of the monthly *Irish Freedom*, knew from personal experience that books and magazines can influence a person's course of life, because it was the reading material recommended 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 developed the conviction that his homeland was a culturally different nation from Britain and should become also a separate political entity (May 2011). 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*. This 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, the former represented a much more radical viewpoint than *Our Boys*, insofar as it was the mouthpiece of the advanced nationalists since its inception. In contrast, the periodical edited by the Christian Brothers originally took a constitutionalist stance on national matters. Second, as clearly stated in the *Handbook*, "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" (*FH* 1914, 23); hence *Fianna*'s denominational neutrality, which manifested itself in the avoidance of discussing narrowly sectarian issues. From Wolfe Tone's declaration of August 1796, Hobson had retained an important principle: that of the non-mutual exclusivity of separatism and non-sectarianism (Hay 2009, 13), which would inform his subsequent initiatives aimed at Ireland's youth. Unlike *Our Boys*, finally, *Fianna* declared the intention to keep its focus squarely on Ireland and Ireland's national affairs, as its unequivocal objective was "to train the youth of Ireland to work mentally and physically for the independence of their country" (*F* Mar. 1915, 3). Whenever the editors and contributors ventured into the realm of

in the recent South African war. The hero (?) of Mafeking might, on a closer study of Cuchulainn, learn to be a little less vainglorious".

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international affairs, the inward-looking impulse did not lose strength: references to the Great War or 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 apparent, that between the former monthly and the *Fianna Handbook* was slight, for the pages of both publications abounded with: information about the various branches of *Fianna* which proliferated throughout the country; instructions on signalling, drilling, and the proper use of rifles; advertisements concerning uniforms, military equipment and the like. Together they also propagated an image of ideal youth which relied on a compound of patriotism and morality. The young Irish 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 against the 'Anglicising force'.

Fianna and its editors approached the young Irish public with the highest hopes. They were committed to exerting a marked influence upon the youth's upbringing, to instilling national pride in their readers, and spurring 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 the country's history of resistance, and usually resulted in the 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, was depicted as a saint prophesising Ireland's freedom from the scaffold 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 was to mobilise new resistance and incite the Irish Boy Scouts to prepare themselves for the eventuality of a war against Britain.

Loyalty, moral probity, tenaciousness, and patriotism were the defining characteristics of this ideal youth ready to fight for Ireland's cause. This ideal youth, by the way, does not seem as prudish as *Our Boys* portrayed him in a serialised story, running from October 1918

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to March 1919, which detailed the day-off of a group of exemplar boy scouts at a local cinema showing "objectionable pictures" (Flanagan 2006, 269-270; see *Fig. 1*). 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. (*OB* Oct. 1919, 35)

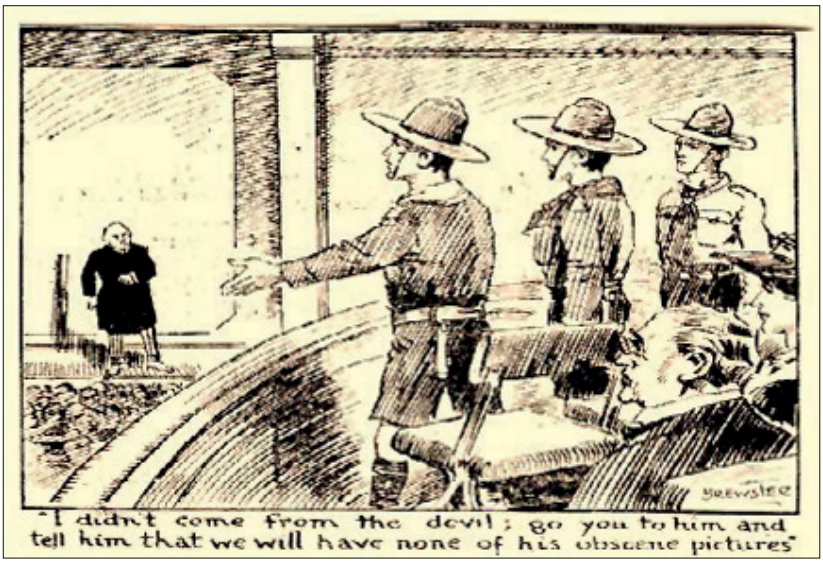

Figure 1. – This is an illustration from the story on the Irish Boy Scouts published in *Our Boys* (Oct. 1919, 35). The boys are depicted as moral guardians, censoring the "obscene pictures" in defence of Catholic morality. It is an attempt at identifying this youth organisation with the ideology of 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. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (K504).

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, and spy stories populated its pages. Its writers dealt with contemporary issues, which were presented in a catchy, fictional form: *Fianna*'s readers could easily grasp what the contributors meant to impart. For instance, the

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tale *The Spy Peril* (*F* Feb. 1915, 4; cf. *infra*, chap. 3) mocked British anti-German propaganda and the phenomenon of spy-fever in Irish society, which was associated to the fear of the "enemy within", namely the enemy that does not come from abroad but is already in the country (aan de Wiel 2012, 25-27; cf. also Pennell 2014, 98-107). In *The Spy Peril*, a husband and his wife report each other to the police: neither 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 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* can be deemed parodies of these popular texts.

Much more ink can be spilt over the general features of *Fianna*. In some respects, *Fianna* might 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 similarities ranging from the stated objectives to – consequentially – the kind of featured articles and advertising. As Virginia Glandon 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, Manchester, Scotland, and Boston. Many of the instructions provided there dealt with aspects of active combat such as rifling, hedge fighting, taking trenches, demolitions of railways without explosives and the likes (Glandon 1985, 80). Finally, regarding 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 (*IV* 7 Feb. 1914, 9) The similarities between the two papers are unmistakable and should be ascribed to the common soil from which

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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 a propagandist in both cases.

Among the similarities, moreover, one should mention the fact that some of the articles and fictional stories published in these periodicals 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. Expressions 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*: rather, it was reflective of a habit not uncommon for the Irish nationalists in the early decades of the century, who often looked up to and commented on the Egyptian and Indian Nationalist movements (O'Malley 2008). The nationalism of early twentieth-century Ireland was deeply intertwined with complex strategies of anti-imperial resistance encoded at various levels of nationalist 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 (Flannery and Mitchell 2007, 14). 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 triggered the creation of a platform for a sharing of experience and intellectual exchange.

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 official estimates were not 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 (2011, 450). She might be 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

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manage to attract much interest outside the nationalist circle associated to the Boy Scouts. Ideally, letter columns encourage an exchange of ideas among the readership and for this reason they can be productive sources of inquiry into the mentality of readers. After reading the messages and essays sent by the young readers to *Fianna*, I would say that this section was geared to reinforcing an existing nationalist sentiment rather than to expanding the readers' base. In light of these considerations, the figure suggested by Marnie Hay might be correct as it corresponds to the number of scout recruits.

These calculations are partially substantiated by an almost farewell editorial in 1915, in which the editors announced to their readers that they would be unable to continue the print run unless new subscriptions were made. Some nationalists, however, must have backed O'Connor and Reynold's efforts, for sufficient money to continue publication was eventually scraped together. Unfortunately, this editorial enterprise was forced to an abrupt end a few months later: *Fianna* ceased publication in February 1916. It happened due to the intervention of British censorship rather than because of 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* emerged as the mouthpieces of the radical fringe of nationalism among the youth.

2.4. "Young Ireland": support for party interests and business nous

Young Ireland and *St. Enda's* came out 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 was conceived as the instrument to spread Sinn Féin ideology among the youth by the publicist Aodh de Blacam, who edited the weekly under the supervision of Arthur Griffith.

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 Election of 1918, so that a considerable amount of fiction and articles published in *Young Ireland* connected directly to

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the arguments and primary objective of the party. Since the Constitution of Sinn Féin stated in plain terms that the party's main goal 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"[7] – it was no coincidence that *Young Ireland* featured accounts of Sinn Féin's political battles in its pages, and stood for complete, 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 periodical's view on Ireland's economy, for instance, *Young Ireland* not only doggedly endorsed the "Buy Irish" campaign, as did *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 weekly over 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 (Strachan and Nally 2012, 70).

It should not be neglected that Griffith even served as the editor of *Young Ireland* for a period, albeit discontinuously: his arrest after the Bloody Sunday of 1920 inevitably forced him to leave the post that he had occupied the year before. Griffith's figure continued to loom large over the periodical even after his untimely death in August 1922, as the editors of *Young Ireland* took pains to commemorate the man who had helped edit the weekly and contributed to it. The late 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" (*YI* 19 Aug. 1922, 1). *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 (Glandon 1985, 69).

Griffith, though by far the most prominent, was not the only leading figure of Sinn Féin to get involved with the publication of *Young*

[7] 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-Sinn-FeinConstitution1907-VN.pdf.

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Ireland. Among its notable contributors 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 weekly. 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 (*YI* 26 May 1917, 4; 21 Jul. 1917, 3). This kind mutual sponsorship through advertisement would last until the cessation of the former.

The presence of staunch Sinn Féiners in the editorial team should not induce this book's reader to think that *Young Ireland* was a tedious propagandistic read. Together these people managed to publish quite a popular periodical for juveniles, notwithstanding the difficulties which the British government and censorship placed in its way. Circulation was especially difficult during the War of Independence, even though *Young Ireland* was one of the few publications 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, *Young Ireland* reached its nadir in circulation figures due to a tightening of British 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 (Public Record Office, CO 904/108; cf. Augusteijn 2012, notes).

Despite the hardships of 1919, nevertheless, *Young Ireland* achieved considerable stature and influence in the island. 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 of kindred character, 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" (*OB* Nov. 1917, 59). As seen

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before, the two publications shared many commonalities regarding their editorial lines, including the promulgation of anti-British and Catholic values: if *Our Boys* was the creation of the nationalist and religious Christian Brothers, *Young Ireland* purported to be "stoutly Irish and devotedly Catholic from cover to cover" (*YI* 21 Apr. 1917, 1).

The success of *Young Ireland* was due mainly to the efforts of de Blacam and his business intelligence. The weekly presented itself as a valid alternative to the flourishing British story papers, as de Blacam managed to shape a periodical 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 weekly's goals, de Blacam castigated the "paddy and stage Irish" (*YI* 26 Apr. 1917, 1), that is the British representations of the Irish. The lower-class Irish were 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 case, 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" (1996, 31). On the other hand, the Irish people garnered the apparently positive connotations of spontaneity and lack of affectation, epitomised in the figure of the Paddy.

Young Ireland was also conceived as a "truly Irish-Irelander paper" (*YI* 21 Apr. 1917, 1). Its pages bristled with accounts of current initiatives in Ireland which reinforced the development of national Irish-Irelander consciousness among the youth. It covered literary, entertainment and sports events which comprised the use or celebration of the Gaelic language, folklore, melodies, and games. With regard to the promotion of the original 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 the regeneration of the language and that of the nation, MacNeill celebrated the Irish speaker as "the truest and most invincible soldier of his nation" (qtd. in Glandon 1985, 6). 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

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national pride, ballads and tales drawing on Ireland's mythology and glorious past filled its pages. These were sometimes interspersed with virulent opinion articles attacking British government ad culture.

The content of *Young Ireland* was not mere propagandistic jingoism. De Blacam deprecated neither fancy nor imagination, convinced that the young audience at large needed stories stirring emotions. His editorial line was characterised by the determination to support party interests combined with a shrewd understanding of the market. Like the editors of *Fianna*, de Blacam and his collaborators could boast a good ear for detecting current vogues in popular literature, so, to whet the desires of their readership, the contributors to *Young Ireland* kindled the imagination of thousands of boys and girls with formulaic stories, such as school-stories and detective stories, which were the most widely read and rapturously remembered (Boyd 2003, 3-7). 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 instinct and quick reaction for self-preservation. Similarly, if Patrick Pearse contributed the school-set serial *The Wandering Hawk* to *Fianna*, Pim, for *Young Ireland*, created the character of the private detective Philip O'Brien, a Hibernian Sherlock Holmes.

At the turn of the century, the world of serialised literature had 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 (Boyd 2003, 92). If Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press could boast the sagas by Sarsfield, *Young Ireland* offered to its readership characters evidently inspired by Sherlock Holmes: Pim's detective stories with Philip O'Brien as the protagonist, the detective / violin player O'Malley, and the expert of poisons Monaygh Fay. Philip O'Brien was a Sherlock Holmes with an Irish flavour and name: deduction skills and the ability to disguise themselves are the *forte* of both characters, but O'Brien wanders through the streets and alleys of Dublin rather than London's. These detective stories were culturally dependent on foreign influences, a fact that seems to contradict their authors' declared intention to produce truly Irish, home-reading material (the weekly was first presented to its readers as "a thoroughly Irish-Ireland Magazine" [*YI* 21 Apr. 1917, 1]). In reality, even though they were not cultural sophisticates, detective stories à la Sherlock Holmes were harmless fodder which supported

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sales figures – innocuous because they were re-fashioned to buttress the separatist agenda of the weekly.

This balanced mixture of instruction and delight proved to be popular among young readers, but the success was not enough to save *Young Ireland* from being ultimately 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 the skills of *Young Ireland*'s editorial team to publish a periodical addressed to adults.

2.5. "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*, which first appeared in March 1918. Its title was a tribute to both the homonymous saint and the Easter Rising leader Patrick Pearse. Saint Enda, after whom the monthly was named, represented the ideal model for the editorial team, "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" (*SE* Mar. 1918, 1).

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. Unlike them, O'Higgins brought considerable journalist experience to the newly founded *St. Enda's*: before its launch, he had already served as an illustrator and ballad-writer for many nationalist magazines and newspapers (*infra*, chap. 5). His political activity through the print medium would ultimately lead up to his arrest in 1922, when he served a month in jail. Until his untimely arrest, O'Higgins had nonetheless supplied many editorials, opinion articles, and stories to *St. Enda's*, for which he had set a clear editorial line. This 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 contributors of this periodical admired Pearse

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without reserve. *St. Enda's* entered the market which built the "patriotic cult" of the Rising and following episodes of militant violence: it was 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" (Hart 1998, 207).

Nurturing the memory of the dead hero, *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. Its contributors claimed the importance of involving boys and girls in the struggle for national self-determination, as they truly believed that the 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" (*SE* Jun. 1922, 50).

Despite this well-defined editorial policy, however, the earliest issues of the magazine failed to attract the interest of the Irish young. 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, the contributors stated 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 periodical for juveniles which jettisoned imaginative literature. The first issue contained many flat and insipid parts, which do not appear to have attracted the interest of Ireland's 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 stanzas 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" (*SE* Mar. 1918, 20).

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

> 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 1½ d.

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> Order *St. Enda's* and *Irish Fun* in the same shop every month in advance. (*SE* Jun. 1918, cover page)

But like *Fianna*, *St. Enda's* managed to recover, successfully continued publication, and even grew in size in the course of the year 1920, as revealed by this notice published in the Christmas Number of 1919: "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 [...]" (*SE* Christmas Number 1919, 376). 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 a 1921 issue (*SE* Sept. 1921, 1).

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 this notice in the pages of *St. Enda's*:

> 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'. (*SE* May 1918, 45)

Importantly, the mutual support obtaining in separatist circles was not confined to messages of praise. Further evidence of this ethos of mutual support was the introduction in the editorial team of expert journalists like Neasa from *Fianna* and *Irish Freedom*, who made substantial contributions to the periodical's growth and development. It is perfectly legitimate to think that the inclusion of skilled contributors in the editorial team determined a shift in *St. Enda's* policy, allowing for the publication of more thrilling narratives. To corroborate this hypothesis, we can take into account that, after Neasa's arrival, *St. Enda's* featured fictional stories that had already appeared in the other story papers and had proved successful among Ireland's youths (cf. *SE* Dec. 1919, 396-398).

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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 the 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 capable of appealing to mass public. Not that were fully successful in this regard either: although the editors and contributors might not have conceptualised an ideal reader of *St. Enda's*, aiming at a broad cross-sectional readership, the periodical was presumably popular, first and foremost, among the sons and daughters of nationalists. Nonetheless, however, they finally managed to acquire a steady readership thanks to the changes in their editorial line.

After the initial moment of editorial crisis, indeed, 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 current events. The most popular stories 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 surrogates 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 designed to justify the violent reactions of the IRA (cf. *SE* Oct. 1921, 8).

What made *St. Enda's* stand out in the Irish publishing scene of the time was the fact of being the editorial product of young contributors, who were only a few years older than the periodical's readers. Akin only to *Fianna*, the monthly is of interest to the contemporary reader or researcher not only because of the nationalist persona it set forth, but also for enabling us to have a glimpse in the mentality of the young of the independence period through the numerous writings penned by youthful authors that *St. Enda's* featured in its pages.

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2.6. Further remarks on the duality of Irish periodicals

As seen in the previous sections, what characterised the Irish periodical scene of the early twentieth century was its dependence on fickle audiences, nationalist networks to establish and preserve, along with governmental interferences that intensified in wartime.

Our Boys, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's* are commendable for the results they achieved, with great efforts, in such a complex panorama. We have seen how the periodicals struggled not to become tedious propagandistic reads; their content was not sheer chauvinism as editors and contributors tried to use page-turning, thrilling stories as the 'package' for their messages. They were convinced that youths, "as a rule, like to have their reading spiced with story and anecdote, and the more highly spiced the better they like it" (*OB* Sept. 1914, 2). Similarly, they tried to forge and maintain bonds with sympathetic nationalist organisations. But was that enough?

The development of juvenile magazines in Ireland was characterised also by the four periodicals' attempts to find a difficult balance between economic profitability and moral/political correctness (cf. Drotner 1988, 237; Beetham 2015). On a regular basis, they were compelled to adjust their editorial line so as to provide continuous pleasures to both the political or cultural institutions they represented and the young themselves; otherwise, they could risk dramatic drops in sales figures.

Overall, the Irish boys and girls displayed a favourable attitude towards *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda*'s over their publication runs, as the market sensibility of the editors often made them topical and sensitive to changes in the readers' needs. Nevertheless, there is a notable exception. It concerns the most popular of these magazines, *Our Boys*, which provides us with a significant comment upon the variability of public interest and the influence it exerts on the periodical' editorial policies. *Our Boys* provided its young readership with an arena wherein one could publicly discuss national matters, and strove to mould the views of Irish youth. 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 (Pennell 2014, 6). As one of the actors in the publishing 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" (Boyd 2003, 6-7; cf. also 67). In the case of the juvenile maga-

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zines analysed here, the beliefs of their purchasers – the youngsters or their parents – contributed to modifying the editors' approach to Irish politics.

This is what happened when 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 Easter Rising. The Rising turned the whole of Irish nationalism towards a radically different position from what it used to be. Although the revolt was initially deplored by the majority of the papers and magazines in print at the time and by most Dubliners, the ensuing prolonged series of executions turned the tide in public opinion: England's brutal over-reaction drove many people to a more radical stance on Irish politics (Githens-Mazer 2006, 150-160). Unlike multitudes of people and institutions, the Christian Brothers were tardy in questioning their views on Irish nationalism after the Easter Rising and its aftermath of violence; so was *Our Boys* (Keogh 2015, 703).

Since its inception, *Our Boys* had adopted a determined Redmondite nationalist stance, and only gradually altered its perspective in response to evolving public opinion. As the political atmosphere grew increasingly tense, resentment escalated at the editor's moderate constitutionalist stance, his failure to acknowledge the Easter Rising – let alone its significance –, and his continued support for Ireland's military involvement in the Great War (Keogh 2015, 704). 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 indeed striking, especially if we consider that many among the leaders of the rebellion had been educated by the Christian Brothers in their adolescence.

The June number, issued about 40 days after the uprising, 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" was the incipit of the opinion article featured in the front page (*OB* Jun. 1916, 267). 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" (*OB* Dec. 1916, 115). The *Freeman's Journal* was a Redmondite newspaper – or, in the words of *Young Ireland*: an "unclean [...] shoneen paper" (*YI* 18 Aug. 1917, 4) – and its 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

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position to enter the separatist field. The cover of the *Bulletin*'s earliest issue after the execution is highly emblematical of the paper's sharp shift in policy: there is nothing as a token 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 his death (*OB* May 1918, 203; *infra*, chap. 3). 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.

The Christian Brothers had to realise that detachment from the prevailing attitudes in Irish politics was no longer a wise strategy and acted accordingly. They appointed as the monthly's editor the advanced nationalist Brother Canice Craven, a friend of Patrick Pearse and his own teacher of Irish in Westland Row in the 1890s. 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. (qtd. in Flanagan 2006, 289-290)

This was the mind of a staunch nationalist and *Our Boys* was going to reflect it.

With Craven holding the reins of *Our Boys*, the magazine more often addressed contemporary events in its fictions. According to Flanagan (2006, 13), the first fictional piece that denotes Craven's unambiguous nationalism appeared in the 1920 June issue. Entitled *Tragedy and Comedy*, it was a story set at the walls of Mountjoy Prison during 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 that it was the first occasion on which 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 monthly's editorial policy was also the growing use of established nationalist iconography, ranging from

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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" (Flanagan 2006, 16). In the same line, the fictional content underwent a 'radical re-fashioning' as, for instance, the priest-hunting redcoats (Cromwell's soldiers) were turned into steel-helmeted British troops, and the Easter Rising significantly 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 immortals, who led the Rebellion of Easter Week" (*OB* Jul. 1922, 365). The very same number also featured a biographical account of the life and deeds of Michael Collins, a celebratory piece about Kevin Barry, and a fictional story about the 1916 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 anecdote further proves the difficulty of achieving autonomy in publishing, while it casts light on the fact that Irish periodicals were forced to react to an unprecedented number of political events in their early years. The struggle for Home Rule was dynamic; girls and women demanded recognition in the public sphere; Europe was descending into the chaos of the First World War. As will be shown in the next chapters, the periodicals usually tackled these matters, preparing the young Irish audience for resistance or critique of the mainstream representations of these phenomena.

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3.
Moulding the Views of Ireland's Youth: Momentous Events in the Juvenile Press[1]

> Othello's occupation is gone. 'Farewell the plumed troop, the neighing steed. The pride, the pomp, and circumstance of glorious war'.
>
> *Our Boys* Dec. 1916, 100

> Only a man suffering from nervous fright and inability to see things sanely could believe that Germany has any influence in Ireland.
>
> *Young Ireland* 3 Nov. 1917, 1

3.1. Premise

Through formal and informal means of education, Irish boys and girls came to learn about the political implications of all momentous events in their country's history. Not only did they discover about rebellions and actions of patriotism of the past, but they were taught how to view contemporary happenings and take an active part in them. The three main historical phenomena examined in the following sections are the First World War, the last phase of the constitutional battle for independence, and the Easter Rising, because of their interrelation and importance in nationalists' discourses. The constitutional struggle was the object of heated debate throughout the pages of the juvenile periodicals, which repeatedly called their young readers to action through support for either the constitutionalists or the radical separatists who demanded Ireland's complete separation from Britain. Its discussion tackled also the most problematic and controversial aspects of political struggles, including accusations of corruption and the arrests of political opponents, as these were neither silenced nor edulcorated by the editors. Nor were young readers shielded from the horrors of the Great War raging

[1] I would like to acknowledge the receipt of a post-doc research grant from the Fondazione Fratelli Confalonieri, which made the research for this chapter possible.

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throughout Europe during the publication runs of the periodicals. The aftermath of violence of the 1916 Easter Rising was likewise dealt with in plainspoken realism in *Young Ireland*, *St. Enda's* and, later on, *Our Boys*. According to the nationalists, concealing them to the youngsters' eyes would have been pointless, even counterproductive.

The Great War impacted many boys and girls personally through their relationships with family members in the Irish brigades of the British Army or other adults' connections to the conflict; the youths were not immune to fear of an eventual loss hinted at by absence in their domestic settings (Jones, O'Brien, and Schmidt-Supprian 2008, 233). Similarly, relatives, friends, and teachers could be fighting at the home-front in the ranks of the Irish Volunteers or join other nationalist groups that did not recoil from active combat. The multifaceted ways in which the lives of the young were affected may be gauged through the letters Irish boys and girls sent to the periodicals (cf. Olsen 2014, 163) as well as through the fictional and non-fictional pieces featured in them.

Ireland's young readers were kept informed about the war not least because the total conflict was the focus of their extracurricular education: in 1914-1918, they were 'mobilised' for the war by the juvenile press, which tried to shape their 'participation in' and perception of it. Moulding public opinion, especially the youths', about the Great War and the fight for self-determination was crucial for the nationalists who wanted the boys and girls of Ireland to perceive those phenomena in a way that buttressed their political agenda: individual action – public or private – was expected to follow.

This chapter brings together rhetorical analysis and historical contextualisation to shed light on how the periodicals met the challenges of representing momentous contemporary events with the intention to forge the young's view of them. Certain rhetorical and literary devices recur, such as parody or juxtaposition strategies whereby the Great War is mentioned in relation to the battle for cultural autonomy. The objectives of these representative practices were multifarious and mirrored the political stance propagated and shaped by the periodicals. Through fictional and non-fictional writings, the periodicals tried to dismantle 'fake news', debunk popular myths, or convey their own truth about the main historical phenomena of the time. Their youthful readers, thus informed, would make up their own mind and act accordingly – with a bit of luck, in each periodical's desired direction.

It was a productive battle of words and images destined to have long-lasting effects on Irish public opinion. A digression on the young's perception of the turning points in twentieth-century Irish history not only

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provides insights into the process of moulding carried on by the nationalists, but it also allows for an investigation of the roots of enduring patterns in Ireland's art of remembrance regarding the Great War and the struggle for national self-determination. The official national narrative of these events, albeit written after achieving independence in 1922, lays its foundations in the nationalists' previous political and cultural activity – including their contributions to the periodical press for juveniles. The hostile or neglectful responses to the First World War, bound to be widely spread in post-war Ireland, were first shaped during the conflict itself by means of the counter-narrative about the war constructed by the radical nationalists. The celebration of the few rebels of the Rising to the detriment of the multitudes fallen in Continental Europe was promoted among the young through, among others, the medium of juvenile periodicals. A survey of *Our Boys* and the likes, therefore, possesses historiographical value in that it enables today's readers to detect the mutations that occurred in the attitudes held by nationalists towards the war and the Irish soldiers in the British Army, ultimately resulting in the glorification of the Easter Risers and the oblivion cascading over the first total conflict (Wallace 2012, 3; Pennell 2017, 259).

3.2. Dismantling 'fake news', debunking myths

The four periodicals provided their young readerships with an arena where one could publicly discuss national matters, although the editors strove to control the direction of the debates and to mould the views of Irish boys and girls. The 'direction' varied according to the periodical, as they upheld different stances on Ireland's political future. The differences in political opinion became evident especially in their representation of historical facts possessing a huge impact on Irish politics, such as the outbreak of the First World War and the Easter Rising, and in the depiction of the main protagonists of the political struggle. It is the case with the portrayal of the leaders of the Parliamentary Party, John Redmond and his followers, who aimed at legislative independence through Home Rule: whereas they received the endorsement of the moderate *Our Boys*, Redmond and his acolytes gathered only harsh criticism from the pages of *Fianna* and *Young Ireland*. The portrayal of these figures and their decisions in the political sphere stands out as a perfect exemplification of those representative strategies meant to dismantle widely circulating fabricated news about Ireland's political lot.

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In the 1910s, debunking myths was the imperative of *Fianna* and *Young Ireland*, the magazines that depicted the option of Home Rule as inadequate: to the constitutionalists' and *Our Boys*'s idea of a semi-autonomous Irish nation existing in harmony with the multinational British Empire, they opposed the alternative vision of a fully and fiercely independent nation-state (Ellis 2000, 7). To them, the prospect itself of Home Rule seemed nothing but an illusionary promise made by the "malevolent" John Redmond, then compared to a "mill-stone" dragging Ireland "down". From the pages of *Fianna*, a writer emblematically cried out to his readers: "In short, Redmond must go" (*F* Jul. 1915, 3).

The leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party was vehemently criticised for his endorsement, on political and religious grounds, of Ireland's involvement in the First World War. Redmond enthusiastically supported the British war effort and his own country's participation in it, linking the sacrifice of Irish people with the implementation of Home Rule and the defence of Christianity against German brutality (aan de Wiel 2003, 1-41; Ogliari 2018, 60). In 1914, Redmond and his constitutionalist party were in a position of political dominance, so their national vision was popularised through mainstream established media and shared by thousands of Irish: at least 210,000 Irishmen volunteered to fight in the British Army over the five war years. Given the political and social circumstances in Ireland, these recruiting figures were impressive and the soldiers' commitment beyond most expectations (Ellis 2000, 10). Divisions from the Catholic, nationalist south served with distinction in Belgium, France, and Gallipoli (Myers 2010, 2; Wallace 2012, 3).

However, Irish separatists had their own propaganda network with which to counter the pro-war work of the constitutionalists, and they launched parallel anti-Britain, anti-war campaigns through diverse media (Johnson 2003, 34). Wary of the Home Rulers' promises, *Fianna* and *Young Ireland* joined the campaigns and endeavoured to convince their readers to mistrust Redmond and his promises. Their strategies included discrediting the party leader, muckraking, and appropriating the opponents' rhetoric to show its deceitfulness; their propagandistic armoury comprised cartoons, jokes, articles, fictional and non-fictional stories.

To start with, *Fianna* and *Young Ireland* tried to expose the contradictions in Redmond's attempts at selling the war to the Irish public. The two periodicals made their readers ponder over the inconsistencies in his speeches to point to the unreliability of the Irish politician and, by extension, of his promises. In July 1915, a message Redmond had sent "from Ireland to the Small Nationalities, through the medium of

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the Sunday edition of the *London Times*" came under *Fianna*'s scrutiny (*F* Jul. 1915, 6). The party leader was accused of having changed his mind over foreign affairs. As *Fianna* pointed out, his statement in the *London Times* that "England's attitude towards its small nationalities is an honourable contrast to the attitude of Germany and Austria towards their small nationalities" clashed with what he had published on the subject in 1912. At the time, Redmond had "eulogise[d] the German Government for its treatment of Alsace-Lorraine, citing the fact the Alsatians have Home Rule with manhood suffrage and that the small minority of French speaking Alsace-Lorrainers possess equal rights for their language". Moreover, "in *Reynold's Newspaper* of November, 11th, 1911, Mr Redmond [...] asked England to follow the liberal example of Germany in dealing with small nationalities". This discrediting display reached then its baleful acme in the conclusion aimed to cast a negative light on the politician, as it reads: "from this, the reader can judge whether Mr John Redmond's message that England's treatment of small nationalities is honourable as compared with their treatment by Germany and Austrian is or is not true" (*F* Jul. 1915, 6). The obvious question a young reader was encouraged to ask was: "Is Redmond, who changes his mind so quickly, trustworthy?". For the editors of *Fianna* – who also strove to point out that while other small countries had Home Rule, Ireland did not, making the British position hypocritical (Hatfield 2020, *private conversation*) – the answer was clearly no (cf. Ogliari 2020, 60).

Besides exposing "the ignorance of Mr. Redmond" (*F* Jul. 1915, 6), *Fianna* portrayed Redmond as a vile politician who had lured Ireland into the Great War for his own benefit. The party leader was working for Britain, not for Ireland, as alluded to when declaring that "Redmond and Carson and their followers at £400 per year are the principal parts of the [British] Government's machine" (*F* May 1915, 7). The separatist press, for both adults and youths, harped on the four hundred pounds paid to Irish Members of Parliament, depicting it as a bribe that turned Redmond and his followers into servants in English pay.

Their reputation was tainted with corruption in the pages of *Young Ireland*, which instructed its youthful readers that the "False Leaders" could be defeated on the political terrain by voting for their opponents – the Sinn Féiners. In an important instance of appeal to youth's agency, the periodical warned its readers that "every vote" for Sinn Féin was "a blow to the tottering wall of corruption that in its strength held Ireland in bondage"; it was every true Irishman's duty to keep "the sacred flame" of patriotism burning to defeat "the Partitionist Faction [...] assisted by the funds and manoeuvres of its paymasters in England"; it was every

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true Irish boy or girl's duty, if underage, to "pray for the Victory of the Right!" (*YI* 12 May 1917, 1). The young were identified as propaganda vehicles, since the patriotic formation they received from the periodicals was meant to be passed on to parents and siblings. It is likely that they reacted to this appeal by voting and/or persuading other people to vote for Griffith's Party through their prayers: nonetheless, *Young Ireland* had reasons, two weeks later, to celebrate with its readers the nationalist victory in South Longford, depicted as the defeat of "Materialism and Corruption" (*YI* 26 May 1917, 1).

Redmond was a corrupted politician, but also a "Corruptionist" (*YI* 2 Jun. 1917, 1) of young minds, as he had persuaded the younger population to join the British Army in support of England's war effort. *Young Ireland* warned Irish boys and girls against those "who put Home Rule on the Statute Book", because they were the politicians who dragged Ireland into the total conflict by giving the youths false hopes (*YI* 26 May 1917, 1). Such a war would not have positive consequences for Ireland, the contributors to *Young Ireland* claimed in conveying their truth to the readers through various types of text, from poems to non-fictional pieces. The main tenets of Redmondite pro-war discourses were appropriated in parodic fashion in a poem titled "The Battle of Longford", which reads: "The cause of Small Nations / With zeal our heart doth fill, / So let's partition Ireland, / And make her smaller still" (*YI* 26 May 1917, 1). This pessimistic sentiment was echoed in another poem, less prosaic in tone, which dealt with a spider and a fly joining an imaginary Peace Conference, where they will have "[...] a splendid spread / Of *Conciliation Syrup* / On *Home Rule Partition Bread*" (*YI* 30 Jun. 1917, 1).

The discourses on the Home Rule option were inextricably connected with those on the Great War, which featured the starkest oppositions in political stance and editorial choices between the periodicals. If *Fianna* portrayed enlistment as unpatriotic and got to the point of vehemently attacking Irish servicemen as traitors, the moderate *Our Boys* attempted to demonstrate the veracity of Redmond's promises about the implementation of Home Rule in exchange of Ireland's war effort. In the portraits featured in *Our Boys*, Redmond is extolled as "a great Irishman, a distinguished parliamentarian, and a notable figure in world politics" (*OB* Apr. 1918, 203). Aware of the allegations of corruptions against the party leader, the Christian Brothers' monthly insisted on his honesty: "the strange tyrannical misgovernment of Ireland" was begun by "Henry II" and perpetuated by Britain alone (*OB* Jul. 1918); Redmond had no part in it, because he "laboured earnestly, and he strove honourably for the attainment of his ideas": he had just "one purpose

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in life", which he "pursued with rare honesty and unflinching tenacity" (*OB* Apr. 1918, 203). Since notions of honesty and honour punctuated *Our Boys*'s remarks on the politician, the periodical did not question the veracity of his statements – "Small nationalities will be recognised", the editors still claimed after years of trench battles, trusting that once the war was over the national rights of Ireland would be recognized through the granting of Home Rule (*OB* Feb. 1917).

Our Boys wanted its readers to think of Ireland's war support as inevitable necessity; indeed, the periodical justified the necessity of engaging in war under the aegis of Ireland's essential values, since it came to legitimise the Great War on moral and political grounds as a defensive war ultimately leading up to Home Rule. On the same wavelength as Redmond's, *Our Boys* claimed that Irish soldiers had to fight bravely on the Continent to defend Catholicism and the rights of small nationalities. It gave credit and publicity to the so-called 'atrocity propaganda', a plethora of allegations that saw the Germans responsible for the destruction of Catholic churches in Belgium and the sinking of the liner *Lusitania*, all of them unprovoked military aggressions against civilians. The Christian Brothers were outraged by the accounts of the mass-slaughters of clergymen in Belgium and of the destruction of the library of Louvain where ancient Irish manuscripts were preserved (aan de Wiel 2003, 21).

Since the inception of the conflict, pro-war propaganda had constructed the German as a barbaric people driven by bloodthirsty militarism. The stories about their atrocities, immensely popular in the first years of fighting, served to corroborate this negative view and arouse a sense of moral injustice and outrage amongst the Irish (Pennell 2014, 93). *Our Boys* did not abstain from exploiting them to spur its readers to enlist in the British Army. Echoing Redmond's war speeches, the Christian Brothers filled the monthly's pages with fictional stories explicitly recalling "Hun" ruthlessness: in *A Message from the Front*, a dying private takes pride in having served "God and Ireland", claiming that he "came out here [at the Western front] to fight the men who are profaning the churches" (*OB* Jun. 1915, 265). The soldier of another tale is said to have "enlisted to defend Christianity" against the Germans (*OB* Dec. 1914, 87). How could the Irish boys refuse to defend other small nations with which they shared the bond of religion?

Readers were also invited to form their own opinion on Ireland's war effort by judging from genuine evidence featured in the monthly. *Our Boys* published first-hand accounts of trench-battles to prove the authenticity of its claims. From summer 1915, the editors gave space

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to the letters sent from the front by Father Francis Gleeson who, as the Chaplain attached to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, witnessed the conflict in person – a photograph of Gleeson wearing the military uniform visually corroborated the authenticity of his claims, lest some readers doubted the reliability of a Catholic priest (*OB* Aug. 1915, 326). His letters, collected under the title *A Soggarth Tells His War Experiences*, are salient and credible accounts of the war, full as they are of references to wounded bodies, physical symptoms, and images of destruction (cf. McLoughlin 2011, 22), which pointed to German lack of moral restraints in warfare. The readers of *Our Boys* were made to see "blood steep[ing] the white clayey trenches, like the grey sea waves", and "black, bleak, sad, deserted" evacuated villages; they were made to hear the deafening noise of warfare as "the activity of aeroplanes" was "tremendous" and there were "bullets flying over and hither in reckless fury" (*OB* Sept. 1916, 5-6). The narrator constantly registered his presence and the directness of his experiences by referring to himself or to the vantage point from which he observed the conflict: "I am now nearly 6 months in the midst of the greatest war in history – the experiences I have gone through have been wonderful as they have been varied" is the introduction to one of his tales; or, reliability is narratively constructed by highlighting the immediacy of the writing act as in the following passage: "stretching away out from the little window whereat I write this, I see the battlefield of a few hours hence" (*OB* Sept. 1916, 5).

Gleeson's accounts disseminated a vision of Ireland's participation in the war as painful necessity. The impact of trench fighting on the Irish servicemen was so massive to defy representation: "the men", recalled Gleeson, "went through unutterable and unimaginable hardships – only to be endured to be believed" (*OB* Sept. 1916, 5). Nevertheless, the good Irish Catholic boys did not surrender in the face of adversity. Gleeson emphasised the righteousness of the war and the spiritual qualities of the men who fought it, discursively aligning the war effort with the forces of godliness and patriotism. The spirituality of the Irish soldier gave him hope and strengthened his arm for combat on the battlefield: "with prayer books and Rosaries" in their hands, the servicemen from Ireland found the courage to stand against the enemy (*OB* Sept. 1916, 6; cf. Ellis 2000, 12). They were exemplary models of young people fuelled by Catholic and nationalist values, who embodied the victory of spiritual values over German immorality.

The contributors of fictional stories likewise showed war's "naked horrors" to signal the rectitude of the Irish servicemen confronted with the devilishness of the conflict and enemies (*OB* Aug. 1915, 322). They

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did not refrain from describing mutilated bodies – "the scattered limbs and mutilated forms, which but a few short hours before had moved about in all the grace and pride of manhood" (*OB* Sept. 1915, 13) –, the deadliness of the "abominable gas" used by the German Army (*OB* Aug. 1915, 322), and the destructive consequences of war on the landscape (*OB* Jun. 1915, 264-265). Unlike most British fiction for juveniles (Fussell 1975; Boyd 2003, 15-16), *Our Boys* offered no space for the potent *mythos* that represented warfare in a romantic fashion with "the pride, the pomp, and circumstance of glorious war" (*OB* Dec. 1916, 100). "There was little scope for [...] personal or romantic glamour", but acts of generous bravery were extolled if pointing to higher moral values and the boys' commitment to Ireland and Catholicism (*OB* Dec. 1916, 100).

In keeping with the strategy of promoting the Great War as a 'just war', the non-fictional pieces in *Our Boys* often became political platforms from which the contributors denounced Germany as a ruthless barbaric destroyer of liberty and the Christian civilization. Commenting on "inhuman outrages" in 1914, a contributor identified "the damage or destruction of the historic churches of Louvain, Malines and Rheims" as the nadir in the descent into "old barbarism" (*OB* Nov. 1914, 86). Less than a year later, another journalist "disgusted" by "German war morality" found further evidence of the enemies' depravity in "the destruction of unarmed merchantmen" with the sinking of the *Lusitania* on May the 7th (*OB* Jun. 1915, 270). The monthly also played on widespread fears of Ireland falling into the hands of the Kaiser: then, the Germans would perpetrate in the British Isles whatever atrocities Belgium had already suffered. Evidence of this was offered by a German offensive military action carried out near West Hartlepool, which possessed "one of the finest churches in the diocese": there, "utmost anxiety was felt lest it might share the fate of the churches of Belgium" (*OB* Feb. 1915, 164). An attack on the east of England could easily be transformed into an attack on Ireland (Pennell 2014b, 46).

Through first-hand accounts and narratives of atrocities, Ireland's youth readers were thus persuaded to enlist. *Our Boys* strove to convince the most reluctant by presenting them with actual role models: some of the monthly's readers and former pupils of the Christian Brothers' schools did serve in the Great War and the periodical showed them the utmost respect, because they were fulfilling the duty of any good Catholic and patriotic Irishman by fighting in Europe. They embodied *Our Boys*'s exemplary soldier, who, fuelled by both Catholic and nationalist ideals, sees war as repulsive but necessary and engages in it if the need arises. The monthly did not fail to celebrate them in its pages

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(cf. *OB* May 1918, 210) and their eulogy shows to what extent the process of probing or dismantling news had youths' agency as its ultimate goal. Moulding public opinion among juveniles was not enough *per se* if not followed by action.

If *Our Boys* toyed with atrocity propaganda aiming at mass-enlistment, *Fianna* and the other periodicals appropriated pro-war propaganda and reversed it to opposite ends. *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda*'s resorted to pro-enlistment rhetoric to incite Irish boys and girls to take active part into the 'just wars' regarding Ireland's cultural and political independence, while *Fianna* employed the semantics and images of atrocity propaganda to show that enlisting to the British Army was an act of treason.

The Boy Scouts' monthly, which accused *Our Boys* of being no better than *Marvel* in its sanctioning of atrocity propaganda (*F* Jul. 1915, 2), constructed the British, not the Germans, as Ireland's barbaric enemies. The editors contended that fabricating false news about German misdeeds was as easy as "it is to sharpen your pencil" (*F* Feb. 1915, 9), and that the accounts featured in *Our Boys* were manufactured tales geared to depicting the enemy as a violent collective entity that needed to be contained and disarmed (cf. Fussell 1975, 75). Reacting to this established portrayal of the Germans offered by *Our Boys*, *Fianna* thus described the Kaiser's subjects as "quite decent chaps", so decent that the British Army servicemen fighting on the Western Front "have been asking themselves why they are fighting at all" (*F* Feb. 1915, 9). Again, first-hand experience was invoked to endorse the favourable portrayal of German soldiers inasmuch as *Fianna* reported the letter of an anonymous recruit who stated that "the German soldiers" were "jolly, cheery fellows for the most part, and it seems so silly under the circumstances to be fighting them" (*F* Feb. 1915, 9). Similarly, a private in the Irish Brigades was said to have kindled candles for the Kaiser's birthday (*F* Feb. 1915, 9).

Fianna blamed or mocked the gullibility of those Irish who believed the accounts of atrocities. Besides proving that the reasons underlying Ireland's war effort were not credible, the periodical warned its readers against enrolling by portraying those brainwashed into the conflict in stark negative tones. Harsh criticism was brought on Irish servicemen and those fighting at the home front. Derision, deprecation, and sarcasm were used by *Fianna* to disprove the legitimacy of the Great War as a nationalist cause. The monthly's contributors invested themselves with the mission of countering pro-war propaganda to point out that Ireland's youth had to fight against Britain to achieve national self-determination. German atrocities were as much a fabrication as the

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Redmondites' promise that Ireland would be paid off by Home Rule for its loyalty after the end of the war. This was a myth, but such a convincing and powerful one that it had impaired the historical vision of Irish boys at the time of their enrolment. Brainwashed into the Great War, these boys did not understand that "the number of Irish quoted daily as dying for England in the Dardanelles is a great tribute to English rule and English influence" (*F* Oct. 1915, 4). The contributors of *Fianna* believed these people had paid "a great tribute to English rule" over Ireland because they regarded the multitudes of Irish war casualties as an unredeemable waste of Ireland's resources in support of the imperial cause when they should have been devoted to the attainment of national independence.

Neither was there respect for the people in Ireland creating a 'home-front' against Germany. Civilians who supported Ireland's participation in the war were treated with disdain, those believing in pro-war propaganda were sneered at in fictional and non-fictional pieces. For instance, the tale *The Spy Peril* mocked the phenomenon of spy-fever in Irish society, connected to the emerging fear of the "enemy within" who does not come from abroad but lurks in the country waiting to strike. Scared of an enemy suddenly hiding in their homes, some people started to be obsessed with pro-German spies and espionage. The obsession degenerated into the appearance of amateur spy-catchers, ordinary men and women who took it upon themselves to deal with spies: they accused other ordinary people of being enemy spies and reported them to the authorities (aan de Wiel 2012, 25-27; Pennell 2014, 98-107). 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, allegedly for espionage: neither is a spy, but the news they read in the papers made such an impression on them that they saw pro-German spies everywhere. Like the soldiers wearing the English khaki, they failed to realise that there was a more dangerous enemy: the British oppressor (Ogliari 2018, 63-64).

The appropriation of the language of atrocities propaganda, the rehabilitation of the 'Huns', and the denigration of the Irish serving in the British Army were all strategies employed by *Fianna* to open the eyes of the Irish boys and girls on the contemporary political situation: Ireland's foreign oppression made the war against Britain the only one worth fighting. To the separatist mind, England was the only enemy of Ireland. And when *Fianna* ceased publication due to the strictures of censorship, its mission of awakening Ireland' youth was perpetuated by *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's*, the emerging mouthpieces of radi-

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cal nationalism among the young. Entering the competition with the pro-war propaganda still flooding Ireland, they continued the campaign against what, in the separatists' view, were manufactured news.

Young Ireland tackled the veracity of the so-called 'atrocity propaganda' and the accusations of collusion between Sinn Féin and the German Empire, notably employing irony to make fun of the propaganda streaming from British presses. Its hyperbolic nature and occasional absurdity were the target of the following joke, reported almost in its full-length. It is told by a fictitious gentleman who, during a "terrible and unusual spell of cold [...] heard of a worthy Belfast citizen, as he came out of his Orange hall, say to a companion: 'Did ya hear the latest, man? Them Germans have torpedoed the Gulf Stream!'" (*YI* 28 Apr. 1917, 1). The Belfast setting and the gullible man's membership to an Orange hall, however, denote a relevant novelty in the periodicals' discursive strategies. If *Fianna* openly derided the Southern Irish who credited the atrocity propaganda and even depicted them as traitors, no such thing is usually found in *Young Ireland* or *St. Enda's*, for reasons that I will discuss later. Suffice here to say that the polemical targets of the periodicals had changed as time passed, and the choices of the magazines regarding their editorial lines mirrored radical changes in public opinion about the war and Ireland's relationship to England.

The use of irony was restricted to allusions to atrocity propaganda that did not result in an explicit critique of the Irish people who believed it. If *St. Enda's* seldom addressed the subject, *Young Ireland* did so in an allusive way. For some issues in May 1917, the weekly used the name 'Atrocities' as the title for a section reporting not the misdeeds of the 'Huns' in Belgium but embarrassing jokes sent by its readers. There were published wince-inducing witticisms such as: "Why is the steeple of St. Paul's Cathedral like Ireland? Because there is a bell fast (Belfast) in it" (*YI* 19 May 1917, 8). The joke fell so flat that they felt the need to explain the pun. However bad the jokes may be, they are revealing of the extent to which the contributors and the readers alike eschewed direct references to what was happening on the Continent. No room was given to satire ridiculing the Irish servicemen and their families.

This impression was further evidenced by the fact that the harshest comments and tones were reserved to the British and the constitutionalists who spread false news in Ireland to discredit their political adversaries. A notable piece of fake news dealt with an alleged compact between the separatists and the German Empire: indeed, "the Chief Secretary", Mr Redmond, "alleged that German influence was at work

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here", among the ranks of the Irish radicals (*YI* 3 Nov. 1917, 1). The latter replied by scorning the accusers. The condemnation of their claims was rife with sarcasm and the accusers' declarations were dismissed as the product of paranoids. John Dillon, by the time a weakened politician of the Irish Parliamentary Party, was ridiculed as a madman thundering "On gold in Sinn Fein coffers / that comes from German source" (*YI* 26 May 1917, 1). *Young Ireland* likewise contested that "only a man suffering from nervous fright and inability to see things sanely could believe that Germany has any influence in Ireland" (*YI* 3 Nov. 1917, 1).

As the destiny of the Kaiser's Army was not a nationalists' concern, so separatist Ireland had no interest in aiding England in the war. Significantly, this conviction never resulted in representations of Irish recruits in the ranks of the British Army which teetered on derision: there is only an implicit instance of it in *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* as opposed to the wealth of such portrayals in *Fianna*. Fighting in the British Army was tainted with collusion in *Young Ireland*'s story *The Visionary*, where a boy asks a grey-haired man "'Were you in the Army, sir?'. The answer was surprising. 'Hwat?'" the man "shot out like a bullet". Then, gently, he advised the boy to "remember that's a rude thing to say" (*YI* 27 Oct. 1917, 5).

The Irish recruit still served as a representational site to display an alternative definition of true Irishness, but vitriolic derision of the servicemen does not seem to play a large role in it. Apparently, there are no examples of antagonistic attitude to Irish servicemen in *St. Enda's*. Critique and derision were reserved for the recruiting sergeants and politicians who aided the recruitment efforts of the Army. In April 1918, even the moderate *Our Boys* published a joke about sergeants. It was sent by a reader, a Kevin Kelly from Kincora, and shows the weariness of the war spreading among ordinary people. It goes as follows:

> Recruiting Sergeant: "I say, why don't you join up? You would make a fine soldier"
> Farmer Jones: "Would I become an officer or a captain?"
> Sergeant: "You might, and you might even get the V.C. after your name"
> Farmer: "If I did, what then?"
> Sergeant: "You would be sent home or leave as Captain Jones, V.C."
> Farmer: "And I might have R.I.P. after my name and not be sent home at all. No sergeant, nothing doing. Try further on". (*OB* Apr. 1918, 204)

In 1921, more than two years after the end of the conflict, *St. Enda's* was still likewise blaming the propagandists and "astute politicians"

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who provided the Irish young with "distorted lens". With the wisdom of hindsight, *St. Enda's* realized that the Irish recruits had made a fatal mistake but claimed to understand their motivations. It acknowledged a fraternal bond with the recruits as they believed to be making their distinct contribution to the achievement of independence – the periodical's very same aim. The monthly felt for its "brothers" who went "blindly forth and heard the cruel laughter of their only foe as their blood dyed the sands of the desert or crimsoned the waters in far off Suvla Bay". But if it did not deny the recruits their patriotism, pointing to an extended brotherhood, *St Enda's* delighted in using infernal imagery in its representation of pro-war constitutionalists: these were "War fiends" with a "voracious maw", who did not hesitate to make "mere wrecks" of Irish boys (*SE* Jan. 1921, 7).

The shift in representative choices can be explained by locating it in the context of late 1910s politics. Frustration was then increasingly growing among Irish people as the costs of war mounted: the memories of tragedies like the destruction at Gallipoli of the volunteer Tenth Irish Division were painful for many (Novick 2001, 56-62). After gruelling years, most people were disenchanted and demoralised with the war. The separatists contributing to *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* deemed wiser to harness the growing frustration against their political enemy, England, than to deride the Irish soldiers, whose families could be potential electors or sympathisers of their cause. Political cleverness persuaded editors and contributors not to alienate the sympathies of potential supporters.

The critique of Irish servicemen and ordinary people did not serve *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* to advance their cause. Nor did the representational rehabilitation of the Germans interest the two periodicals. They preferred to devote their energies to discrediting the English and the anglophiles in equal measure. Cruelty and sadism, ostensibly attributes of the 'Huns', were here associated to the people living in "England – the land where '*Kill Germans like rats*' is the cry" (*YI* 20 Oct. 1917, 4). The contributors to *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* did not fail to mention and attack the plans for establishing conscription, because they were functional to their jingoistic campaign against Westminster: notions of exploitations, unfairness, and oppression characterised the deeper structures of these pieces in order to give a full picture of the consequences of foreign rule over Ireland. Those people had first dragged Ireland into the massive phenomenon that was the First World War – "the Wars of the Roses, The Crimean War, and the Boer War" seemed "mere street fights, school-yard squabbles" compared to it

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(*YI* 1 Apr. 1917, 1) – to advance their imperialist cause. Now, with the voluntary recruitment failing across the British Isles as time passed, they were trying to impose conscription in Ireland.

However, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* did not limit their counter-narratives to exposing the devilishness of pro-war propagandists. More often, they employed new ploys to forge the young's response to the Great War and to further the cause of Irish independence. Accounts of first-hand experiences, previously a means of authentication, left room to strategic juxtapositions. By 'strategic juxtaposition', it is meant the deliberate choice to juxtapose the narration of the Great War with the so-called 'just wars': the war on Anglicisation as conducive to the battle for political independence. *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* highlighted the painful uselessness of Ireland's war effort in comparison to the greater relevance the war on Anglicisation had in achieving independence. And Irish boys and girls could join these 'just wars'. The periodicals' writings were designed to forge character and persuade youths that they could make tangible contributions to Ireland's war effort – a war effort, it is worth emphasising, which did not imply sending soldiers to Gallipoli or Flanders.

3.3. Demanding youth's agency for the just wars

Towards the end of the conflict, the separatists' glorious dream of an Irish nation-state seemed finally attainable. In *Young Ireland*, de Blacam pitied "the schoolboys of 2017 A.D. – the boys who will have to study this terrible story of confusion"; on the surface, he sympathized with all the students focusing on the times in which *Young Ireland* appeared: "terrible times" with the world at war and "the globe, it might be said, aflame". In reality, the incipit of the article functioned as a paradox to emphasise that the Irish students of 2017 would regret something else more acutely:

> But the people of Ireland a hundred years hence will grieve that they did not live in the early years of the 20th century; aye, and in fifty years' time those of us who still live will be looked on with envy. Young people will crowd around us and ask for tales and recollections. And we shall lift our snow heads and talk of the great men we saw in Ireland, and boast if we shook hands with them [...] Ireland is coming into her own at last – and by what great privilege are we given to be born in the generation that shall see it! (*YI* 1 Apr. 1917, 1)

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Complete separation from England seemed in plain sight in the years 1917-1918. The Home Rule settlement collapsed, and people became increasingly diffident of England's promises of legislative autonomy for Ireland: the condemnation of English hypocrisy put forward by the separatist press, including the one intended for juveniles, gained resonance among vast sections of the moderate electoral base. The constitutionalist version of Irish nationalism had largely run its course by December 1918, when Sinn Féin triumphed in the General Election annihilating the Irish Parliamentary Party.

As early as July 1918, *Our Boys* had sensed that the tide was turning in favour of the separatists and showed timid support for Griffith's party; the periodical sent out a message of resistance against England's designs to introduce conscription in Ireland, by extolling the ninety Sinn Féiners who in "Ireland, too long exasperated by British empirics and their broken pledges, rose against the unconstitutional and immoral imposition of a blood tax against the national will" (*OB* Jul. 1918, 125). Nevertheless, the radical shift in the monthly's editorial stance was yet to take place, and the most authoritative voices in the Irish juvenile press were *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's*, which had promulgated separatist ideology since their inceptions.

Eager to legitimise the independents' cause as the only one the Irish people had to fight for, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* made increasingly selected references to the First World War as time passed. These occurred in articles and stories about the future of Ireland, or in juxtaposition with the so-called 'just wars' – the wars for cultural and political independence. An example of the former is encapsulated in the speculations about post-war opportunities for Ireland, which *Young Ireland* voiced in its pages, and it was incarnated in its coveted idea of a Peace Conference where Irish representatives could demand the recognition of Ireland's ancient sovereignty (*YI* 18 Aug. 1917; cf. also 28 Jul. 1917; 25 Aug. 1917).

Of greater interest are the many pieces dedicated to the 'just wars'. Regarding the fight against the Anglicisation of Ireland, it has been shown how all the periodicals aimed to highlight Irish cultural difference by offering great publicity to all the preserves of Gaelicism, from Irish folk music to the tradition of ballads. The rediscovery of Irish Gaelic heritage and the cultural emancipation of Ireland were perceived by radicals as the prerequisites for political independence. Therefore, the articles on Gaelic culture grew in number in the last two years of the conflict and a similar increase was noticeable in the amount of appeals to rediscover Gaelic heritage and to fight for Ireland. These appeals were

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articulated through the use of religious lexicon and in the language of British and pro-war propagandists.

The religious connotation of nationalist discourses cannot pass unnoticed. If *Our Boys* tapped into deeply held, shared Catholic values through its pro-recruitment messages, *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* fell back to religious terminology to move the hearts of their readers. The war on Anglicisation was described through words that adhere to religious vocabulary such as "holy", "mission", and "faith". Irish boys and girls were invested with the mission of restoring the Irish language; the linguistic conflict acquired the status of "the Holy War of the Gael" (*YI* 28 Apr. 1917, 1; 20 Oct. 1917, 1). The contrast between the holiness of the cultural war and warriors, and the devilishness of the First World War could not be more complete. Incidentally, it is interesting to notice that the other great reservoir of images for the periodicals was that of the illegitimate war *par excellence* itself, the Great War. It provided the imagery employed to reinforce the notion that the only legitimate wars were those for Ireland's cultural and political independence. More precisely, the separatists appropriated the backbone of English visual and written propaganda.

The appropriation of the semantics of pro-war propaganda is exemplified by the article "Recruiting" published in October 1917. The anonymous writer began the piece by spurring its readers "[to] do his or her bit" to "roll back the tide of invasion": "a great peril" was threatening Ireland. "Invasion", "peril" and the call to arms were recurring words in the numerous books, published after the success of Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) in pre-war years, which brandished the spectre of a German invasion of Britain or Ireland (cf. aan de Wiel 2012, 29-30; Stevenson 2013, 28; Caponi 2014, 39-41). But the semantics of this fear-mongering literature is here at the service of the campaign to recruit soldiers, not for the British, but for the Gaelic Army: the youngest among the periodical's readers, too young to fight for Ireland with weapons, were expected to learn the Irish language, thus countering the noxious effects of British culture (*YI* 13 Oct. 1917, 3).

The juxtaposition of war propagandistic images with the struggle to restore the ancient language was reinforced a page later in the same issue, where the short article "Join Up!" spurred "absolutely every reader [...] to join up – and to bring one recruit". Again, this invitation was not to enlist into the British Army but rather to enter the Gaelic classroom. The agency of Ireland's boys and girls was demanded, and its potential impact was not belittled. By learning about the Gaelic heritage and transmitting that knowledge, the youths could become the main

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protagonists in the protection of their country from the "invasion" of the enemy culture. *Young Ireland* placed deliberate emphasis on the consequences of juvenile activities when adding that "one Irish scholar, prattling his little phrases at the tea-table, can spread dozens of Irish worlds among the family" (*YI* 13 Oct. 1917, 4).

The 13th October number was "a recruiting issue" for the indefatigable *Young Ireland* (*YI* 13 Oct. 1917, 3), which inserted itself within the frame of English propagandistic rhetoric around the conflict also by appropriating its iconic images. The power of persuasion of written words was enhanced by cartoons, repeatedly reprinted throughout several issues, which provided effective visual correlatives to the articles and satirised pro-war recruiting posters[2]. One of the most famous, released in 1915 across the British Isles, showed a little girl posing a question to her father: "Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?"[3]. *Young Ireland* appropriated the iconography of the poster and married it to the righteousness of the linguistic battle. In a cartoon of the Irish magazine, a child wearing a kilt and holding a *camán* in his hand asks to his father: "What will you say to your son in 20 years' time when he says *An d-tuigeann tú Gaeilge*? ['Do you understand Gaelic?']" (*YI* 13 Oct. 1917, 1). Mixing English with Irish, the poster played on the guilt associated with not advancing the Gaelic cause and, at the same time, artfully crafted images of both proper manhood and boyhood. It defined 'real' Irishmen those fighting for the restoration of Gaelic heritage, and 'real' boys those who recalled the adults to their patriotic duties.

Yet, another poster questioned more explicitly the youth's sense of self-worth. In the very same issue as the Daddy's poster, the famous poster of Lord Kitchener with the pointing index finger was evoked to emphasise that the only true cause and war were those for Ireland and Gaelic heritage; in its nationalist refashioning published in *Young Ireland*, a man wearing the Tara brooch and pointing his forefinger to the spectator is shown asking: "Are you learning Irish?" (*YI* 13 Oct. 1917, 5, and later issues). Notwithstanding its simple design and single colours, the Irish take on Kitchener's poster is a visually strong example of counterpropaganda. The visual reference is clear, as much as the attempt to render the experience of the Great War a touchstone to assert

[2] As Catriona Pennell noted, "the poster was the principal means of mass communication for recruitment and became the locus for the recruiting campaign in Ireland" (2014b, 46).

[3] A reproduction of the war recruitment poster can be viewed here: https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/17053.

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the centrality of nationalist battles. The separatists viewed the war on Anglicisation as far more relevant to the struggle for self-determination than the war effort. They scaled down the immensity of the First World War in their narratives in wartime to raise awareness among their readers of the greatness of the linguistic and cultural battle.

This representational process reached its climax when the conflict was over and the country was slowly descending into the Anglo-Irish War, begun in 1919. As an insurrection against the British rule was about to occur, it was high time to issue another clarion call to Irish young people. Considerable pressure was brought to bear on them to fight the English not through cultural or linguistic means only, but in active combat. It should be remembered that the readership of these periodicals was formed by young people already of military age or fit enough to be nurses, lookouts, or messengers for those who took up arms. It was a crucial section of Irish society to whom *Young Ireland* and *St. Enda's* (and *Our Boys* under Brother Craven's editorship) offered stories where the good Irish servicemen depicted in *Our Boys* in the early years of the conflict gave space to paramilitaries, assistants to local IRA commanders, messengers, or lookouts. The battlefields of Europe were replaced by the Irish landscapes where the guerrilla war between the IRA and the Black and Tans was being fought (cf. Flanagan 2002, 46).

The characters in these stories fought in the name of the Easter Risers and other rebels like Thomas Ashe, who "trod the martyr's noble way" (*YI* 20 Oct. 1917, 6). The brutal repression of the 1916 revolt had made martyrs of the small group of dissidents led by Patrick Pearse and those who followed in their wake in later years. Whether or not Pearse and his comrades went willingly to their deaths is impossible to know; what is known is that the images of these heroic Irish were constructed after 1916 resorting to the semantics of martyrdom and martyrologues (Beatty 2016, 26-27). Religious lexicon and imagery were deployed to portray the charismatic figure of the Irish Volunteer, secure in the righteousness of his battle, standing resolute against the British multitudes, ready to sacrifice himself for the nation.

Emblematical is the fictional story *Two Soldiers* by Eibhlin de Paor, published when the Irish political atmosphere was fraught with political tensions (*SE* May 1921, 10). It tells of two cousins, one Irish and the other English, called Seamus and George – note the evocative choice of names – who made opposite life choices. The former, willing "to serve Ireland" like "his patriot father", refused to enrol into the British Army and joined the Irish Volunteers. "I am no coward, but I am Irish, and I

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will not save Ireland's enemy" was his reply to the exhortation to enlist into the Army. In the Easter Rising, he ended up fighting his cousin and was mortally wounded by him. He died with a rifle in one hand and a Rosary in the other, which the narrator carefully mentioned to allude to the core values inspiring young Seamus: Catholicism and love "for the Dark Rose". The description of his death, a long passage detailing the moment when George's bullet met Seamus's body and the latter's last words, employs the iconography of Catholic martyrdom – Seamus is portrayed bearing his wounds with composure, with the Rosary in one hand and addressing his last words to God and Ireland. Seamus's composed countenance is made to clash with George's immorality, who is later depicted cheering over the other's death with alcohol and "a gay laugh": a description that would remind the readers of the mob mocking Jesus Christ at the foot of the Cross. Alternatively, the remarks on the consumption of alcohol and feasting may be read as further allusion to the stark contrast between Gaelic moral purity and English debauchery. Nonetheless, with his sacrifice, Seamus's "noble soul joined his father in the endless army of martyrs" who died for Ireland, and for this reason the boy's name will be remembered.

Seamus was meant to serve as an exemplary model intended for the youthful readers to emulate, not unlike all the other young figures, fictitious or historical, which appeared in stories set during the Easter Rising. Indeed, it is in juxtaposition with the Easter Rising that the First World War is referred to, albeit rarely, in juvenile periodicals after the outbreak of the Anglo-Irish War. Through this juxtaposition, the periodicals offered to their readers contrasting images of delusional Irish boys fighting in the service of the King and noble 'martyrs' who died for the right cause (cf. Ellis 2000, 8).

These contrasts are well exemplified in other two tales published in *St. Enda's* in the context of impending Civil War, which constructed the experience of the 1916 uprising as the true expression of essential Ireland: *The Choice* and *Two Soldiers* (*SE* Jan. 1921, 13-14; 12 Feb. 1922, 2 respectively). They share a similar schematic plot pattern reminiscent of the story of the other tale titled *Two Soldiers* already examined: the protagonists are either two brothers or cousins who make opposite choices – while one enlists in the British Army and is killed in action in Flanders, the other joins the Irish Volunteers and dies fighting for Ireland in the uprising. If the latter is honoured for his sacrifice, the former lies forgotten in a foreign land. In *The Choice*, the tombstone of the gallant hero is covered with "wreath and beautiful flowers, [...] eloquent testimony of a Nation's love and reverence", while his brother

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is buried in "a foreign land, under a foreign flag". No glorious fate befell the Irish recruit, but it was a fate of his choosing because "in the hour of his country's great need he did not see or understand" and enrolling he "left [his] own Motherland an easy prey to her foe". His death was thus to be mourned only with regret (cf. Ellis 2000, 27). Opposing the vision of patriotic sacrifice on European battlefields fostered by the constitutionalists, the periodicals glorified the sacrifice of the Irish Volunteers as entailing hope for national redemption. Their blood was spilt to overrule the British oppressor and their sacrifice showed that its power could be undermined: they had redefined the relationship between Irish nationality and the Empire. Now, it was incumbent on the younger generations to honour that sacrifice by carrying out the Volunteers' mission on the guerrilla battlefields.

These tales well exemplify the nationalists' sceptical opinion on the Great War in the early 1920s. In war years, the periodicals anticipated and even fostered a climate of growing radicalisation, which would lead to the glorification of the minority of the Easter Rising, "Ireland's little hero-band", to the detriment of the far larger numbers who had served for the cause of small nations. After the Irish Free State came into being in 1922, the Great War was relegated to oblivion at political and academic level. The immensity of the conflict and Ireland's participation in it was to be downsized in the history of the country for decades (Novick 2001, 17). For decades historiography constructed the experience of the Easter Rising rebels as an event of greater significance and cultural weight than the World War for Ireland's national history, inasmuch as Pearse's rebellion was "acknowledged by historians [...] as the central political event of these years" (Novick 2001, 17). Selective amnesia fell on the Irishmen who had fought in British uniform. It took until 1968, fifty years after the Armistice, to see the publication of the first book on the subject, Henry Harris's *The Irish Regiments in the First World War*. It took another twenty years to see the second, David Fitzpatrick's *Ireland and the First World War* (aan de Wiel 2006, 4; cf. Novick 2001, 16).

Selective amnesia connoted governmental attitudes to the conflict as well. The First World War did not provide a suitable narrative for the newly formed southern state, whereas the 1916 Easter Rising delivered the story of sacrifice around which national identity was constructed (Bryan 2018, x). The war memorial gardens at Islandbridge bear witness to the complex interpretation of these crucial historical events. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the gardens were originally destined for Merrion Square. But the political leadership of the 1920s clearly thought that,

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even though the Irish servicemen fallen during the Great War were not necessarily as unpatriotic as *Fianna* portrayed them, they should not be remembered in the heart of the city. Islandbridge was ultimately chosen because it was remote from the centre and from the consciousness of its people (Horne and Madigan 2013, 3).

The tide in Ireland's historical narrative was turned only in 1998, partially owing to the success of the Good Friday Peace Agreement, which determined a détente in the political relationships between Britain and Ireland. Few months after its signature, on the 80th anniversary of the Armistice, the then President of Ireland Mary McAleese and Queen Elizabeth II jointly dedicated the Irish Peace Tower on the site of Messines Ridge: the memorial commemorates the collaborative war effort by the 36th Ulster Division and the 16th Irish Division in the 1917 battle of Messines Ridge (Gallagher 2019, 19). The importance of the commemorative joint gesture is hard to overstate. Since then, the Republic of Ireland has incorporated memories of the war within its national consciousness, and scholars have restored complexity to the period and recognised the density of the competing narratives then created (McGaughey 2015, 128).

3.4. Concluding remarks: who should fight for Ireland?

The years between 1914 and 1923 were among the most transformative in modern Irish history. Beginning with the outbreak of the First World War and ending with the nascent Irish Free State, this long decade of war, revolution, and rapid social change gave birth to contemporary Ireland (Horne and Madigan 2013, 1). Irish nationalists took pain to bring the youths on their side in this period fraught with tensions, realising that they could be the engines of massive transformations. The imperative was to make young people conscious of the current political situation and its implications for Ireland within a nationalist framework. The final objective was to mould a young man or woman who could take a critical stance on British or pro-British propaganda and act accordingly. To that end, the nationalists received considerable assistance from the juvenile press.

The study of youths' leisure reading material is of significance as it enhances our understanding of how boys and girls were raised to be the builders and citizens of the future Irish nation: first, their opinions were shaped to fit in a radical political agenda. Second, this process of

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forging was not limited to 'rescuing' the boys and girls of Ireland from the brainwashing that came under the British yoke. Through popular, dedicated periodicals, Irish boys and girls were taught about their roles and their potential contribution to the national cause.

In the next chapters, we take a step forward to further investigate which roles the boys and girls of Ireland were supposed to take on, shifting focus on the ideals of boyhood and girlhood set forth by the periodicals. Who should fight for Ireland? What values should they incarnate?

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4.
Ideals of Girlhood

> Ireland belongs to Irish girls as well as to Irish boys.
> *Young Ireland* 20 Oct. 1917, 6

> Fair women, meet partners for the warriors, chiefs, and statemen of the older race.
> *St. Enda's* Jul. 1918, 77

4.1. Daughters of the Nation? How could Irish girls contribute to the cause?

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, at the turn of the twentieth century, Irish nationalists demanded the energy of Ireland's youth to carry a fundamental objective into practice: the attainment of independence. In their eyes, Irish boys and girls could participate in advancing independence by innumerable means other than active combat, which were addressed by the editors of *Fianna* in the very first issue of the monthly in a discussion over the youths' potential contribution to the cause:

> Prepare yourself. There are plenty of ways you can help Ireland now that she needs you most. Do not put it off; to-morrow will be too late. Ask yourself to-day: What can you do? How can you benefit your country most? (*F* Feb 1915, 3)

The tone of this excerpt well represents the typical content of the periodicals studied here. It also introduces a fundamental issue concerning the specific nature of the effort that Irish young people would be expected to contribute to the cause. The investigation of these efforts constitutes the core of the last two chapters of *Birth of an Independent Ireland* and is complemented with the analysis of the ideals of boys and girls set forth by the periodicals.

Exploring the kinds of juvenile contribution to the cause implies tracing the contours of the exemplary models of girls and boys put forward in nationalist discourses, insofar as the boys' and girls' supposed share of the fight was inextricably bound with what was deemed desir-

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able of either gender. The editors of the magazines constructed very specific images of Irish girlhood and boyhood, generally designed to foster a sense of loyalty to Ireland and the nationalist cause, but major variances can be noticed in how different periodicals presented the contribution of either boys or girls to the fight for independence. Unsurprisingly, boys were especially valued in terms of the role they were expected to play in the long struggle for self-determination, but discussions about the girls' position in relation to wider national matters also found room in *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's*. These reflected either the more progressive or the more conservative view on the women's issue held by the editors and contributors, a whole gamut of opinions which stands in stark opposition to the convergence of discourses and the general consensus in the periodicals on the desirable qualities of the ideal Irish boy.

How youths should have been and what was to be expected of them, therefore, are the main topics of the final chapters of this volume. Since the themes of female participation in the struggle for independence and the representation of girlhood in periodical literature are underdeveloped subjects in the context of Irish Studies, I will start my analysis on the ideals of girlhood and boyhood by exploring the former first.

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" (2007, 50). 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 focus on how girls were trained to be good wives and mothers, and how they introjected the notion that their home duties would have to predominate. These limitations point to a lacuna in the current scholarship that needs to be saturated (Cahill 2016, 212-227). And, just as the scholarship on juvenile literature is patchy so the scholarship on the history of girls' contribution to the nationalist cause is far from exhaustive.

To fill these gaps, chapter four examines the debates about the Irish girl in the context of nation-building both during and in the aftermath of the fight for independence. Hopefully, this investigation will unearth the underlying tensions between an ideal of female domesticity and the changing realities of Irish girls' lives at the beginning of the twentieth century. In a country still under British rule, the role of girls and young

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women raised concerns among politicians, priests, and the press: many actors and organisations were involved in the construction of the Irish girl, and voiced their ideals and desires through the print medium – the number included the periodicals intended for juveniles, which did not fail to take part in the discussion on desirable girlhood.

A bird's-eye survey of this book's corpus points to a problematic status of girls in the Irish nationalist movement, suggesting that girls who wanted to participate actively in it faced many difficulties. Incidentally, an ancillary position in the struggle reserved for women is somehow embedded in the fact that *Young Ireland* was the only periodical devoted explicitly to both girls and boys, whereas the others had the Irish boys as their implied readers.

Young Ireland stands out as an exception in the corpus because, since its establishment, it featured a column devoted to the Irish *cailíní* ('girls' in Irish), the *Cailin's Column*, which was distinguished by its preoccupation with the position of girls in relation to wider, national society. The *Cailin's Column*, in which nationalist propaganda matched with women's/girls' claims of gender equality, was edited by Máire Nic Chearbhaill, a graduate student involved in the cultural and political revival of Ireland. So far, the voice of Nic Chearbhaill has remained "hidden from history", as hers was not a leading feminine voice: very little is known about the life of this author and, in the research for this study, I could rely only on her contributions to *Young Ireland* to flesh it out (cf. Colman 1997, 203). From the paucity of autobiographical details in her articles, it was possible to gather that Nic Chearbhaill was a feminist activist fighting for the general enfranchisement as well as a graduate student from Dublin, with an avid interest in Irish literature and folklore. What makes her voice worthy of attention are the efforts she made to share her knowledge and nationalist ideas among young girl readers, whom she envisioned as the protagonists of nation-building. It was the rank-and-file women like Nic Chearbhaill who provided the backbone of the resistance against British rule, often at some considerable cost to themselves (cf. Ward 1995a, *preface*; McCoole 2003).

Nic Chearbhaill's objective was to urge and help her young readers to enter the public arena created by the magazine – an open communal space dedicated to the sharing of ideas, where to promote and debate the nation's good (cf. Habermas 1989). In her pages, she published the letters of her readers to create a forum where to discuss Irish politics, economy, and the girls' contribution to nationalist struggle: here, girl readers could talk about "their duties in the service of Ireland", including saving the national language, promoting home industry (*YI* 26 May

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1917, 43), and retrieving Gaelic pastimes such as hurling and camogie from oblivion. Even the discussions on seemingly trivial subjects such as the need to establish GAA clubs in "all Girls' Schools of Ireland" – an introduction Nic Chearbhaill regarded as "badly needed" (*YI* 26 May 1917, 43) – should be understood within the wider framework of the debates around the girls' role in Irish society and their contribution to the cause. Casting light on issues of gender equality, reader Nora ni Lideadha from County Tyrone wondered in a letter to *Young Ireland*, "why should the task of bringing back Gaelic football and hurling be left principally to boys? [...] Girls can play hurling too". The restoration of those "sports and pastimes that the English have endeavoured to replace by their national outdoor exercises" (*YI* 19 May 1917, 7) was deemed conducive to the regeneration of the country, and Nora and Nic Chearbhaill were referring to more general questions about the "girls' share" in the extracts above.

It was Nic Chearbhaill's imperative to urge and facilitate the entrance of the readers of the *Cailin's Column* into the public space of politics and political decision-making, so that they could contribute to shaping the process of nation-building at governmental level. By providing a forum for the experiences of a wide variety of Irish girls, the periodical attempted to expand the narrow definitions of Irish girlhood that were prevalent in popular cultural and political discourse at the time.

It was part of *Young Ireland*'s project of cultural and political transformation to contribute towards the widening of the narrow road that would lead young women to play a prominent role in Irish society. In this regard, the clarion call to *Young Ireland*'s girl readers to send in their personal observations and stories gives us an insight into their willingness to contribute actively to the regeneration of Irish society. Evidence is contained in this excerpt from an essay written by a Dublin's girl called Maedhbh Praigheas, who states that

> Ireland belongs to Irish girls as well as to Irish boys, and the former should be eager to promote her welfare and to advance her cause as the latter. [...] The girls should set to work and should shoulder a great share of the responsibility which lies on all of making Ireland Irish, and each one should do what lies in her power to put stop to the Anglicising influences at work throughout the land. (*YI* 20 Oct. 1917, 6)

Similar sentiments were echoed by "a Maryborough *girseach*" ('young girl' in Irish), who, addressing her peers, claimed that "the heart of every Irish girl is, I am sure, full of love for Ireland. They can help their country in many ways" (*YI* 26 May 1917, 43).

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Nic Chearbhaill and her young correspondents took up questions that had previously been debated in the pages of *The Nation*, *Freeman*, and *Shan Van Vocht*. The very same questions were also being discussed in magazines coeval to *Young Ireland* such as *L'Irlande Libre*, *Bean na h-Éireann*, and the *Irish Citizen*. Indeed, the articles in the *Cailin's Column* reveal Nic Chearbhaill's community of interests with the women writing for the nationalist press addressed to adults – a community further proved by the fact that she adapted the strategies devised by the others to meet the needs of her particular readership consisting of teenage girls.

In my view, the debates about the Irish 'nationalist girl' must therefore be located both in the wider context of the analysis of nationalism in connection with the gendering of nation-building and against the background of coeval adult newspapers run by women. The juxtaposition of different print documents is instrumental to contextualise the efforts made by the juvenile periodicals to offer a 'narrative of the nation' and contribute to the definition of an appropriate national identity for girls after the attainment of political independence. In this way, it is easier to detect recurring patterns in the representation of Irish female adolescence in Irish nationalism. For instance, we come to realise that, whilst being a unicum in the panorama of the four periodicals for juveniles, *Young Ireland* aligned itself with some women's papers through its assertion of national independence and gender equality. As will be shown, the weekly edited by de Blacam shared many commonalities with *Bean na h-Éireann* and the *Irish Citizen* regarding rhetorical and discursive practices. In particular, both *Young Ireland* and *Bean na h-Éireann* endeavoured to imagine into existence a "rising young woman", aware of the difference of Gaelic culture and essence, and argued for her place in the nation-building (cf. Cahill 2018, 167).

This chapter will therefore be concerned first with the exploration of the different constructions of girlhood offered by the periodicals intended for juveniles – *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's* – followed by the enumeration of the set of strategies proposed in the pages of *Young Ireland* aimed to enable young women to take active part in the nation-building. Both analyses will be set against the background of the articles published in earlier coeval and previous women's newspapers campaigning for female admission to citizenship and Ireland's independence. This with the objective to pinpoint common patterns in the representations of girls and in the strategies employed by many women to make their own voices – and those of other women – heard.

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The second part of this chapter will emphasise the efforts of Nic Chearbhaill and other nationalist women to overcome the divide between the public and private sphere, by revalorising the role and responsibility of the Irishwoman and girl within their domestic space. Far from relegating them to the household milieu, the ideology of 'separate spheres' was appropriated by female correspondents and editors, who turned it into a propagandistic instrument to give all Irishwomen and girls a role in public life.

The next section of this chapter is devoted to the observation and discussion of women's role in society in the print medium since the nineteenth century and aims to bring to light the community of interests among periodicals targeted to different audiences. On the one hand, it can be seen how the remarks in *Young Ireland* contrast sharply with the depictions of girlhood put forward by *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, and *St. Enda's*; on the other hand, light is shed on the discursive strategies that served as a blueprint for Nic Chearbhaill and her contemporaries to claim gender equality and a primary role for girls in national matters.

4.2. The national awakening of Irish women and girls

In addition to fuelling nationalism since the mid-nineteenth century (Andrews 2014, 7), the Irish nationalist press also facilitated Irishwomen's access to politics and culture in a sanctioned form, because writing for newspapers like *The Nation* and *Freeman* was deemed a socially acceptable female activity. Through the prism of nationalist periodicals, Irishwomen came to actively participate in public dialogue and they played a decisive role in fomenting national awareness by contributing articles, poetry, and fiction to these publications. In the 1840s, Margaret Callen and Lady Jane Wilde (Oscar's mother) entered the public sphere by becoming contributors – and later editors – of *The Nation*, where they created a space for information and representation open to other women. From then on, women continued to have a strong presence in the Irish press industry either as editors or regular contributors; up to the end of the century, more than five hundred women were writing and publishing throughout all genres (Colman 1997, 203), thus advancing the political, social, and cultural discourse in their country. In particular, *The Nation* boasted outspoken women writers in its ranks, who aimed to enhance women's role in Irish society.

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ISSN 2283-5628 - ISBN 978-88-7916-951-6 - https://www.ledonline.it/index.php/LCM-journal/pages/view/LCM-series

As early as the 1840s, many female correspondents turned the periodicals into an instrument to buttress a specific feminist agenda as the discussion on national duties, in their pieces, often merged with that on women's rights (Cannavan 1997, 212). In the pages of these periodicals, they sparked a debate on women's proper roles in the national movement, which provoked heated reactions. In an 1843 article published in *The Nation*, women were requested to work for Ireland only in the "private sphere" of the marital home by educating their children in nationalist principles. The piece aroused the indignation of many women authors, whose reply was not long in coming: in the daily's subsequent issues, they asserted that political activism was not men's exclusive property and claimed the right to work for national self-determination in the public sphere, by participating in independence movement societies such as the Irish Confederation (Cannavan 2004, 40). Although their claims were endorsed by some leaders of the movement like John Mitchel – who even urged women to shift from a battle of words to active combat – most men resisted women's direct participation in politics. 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 (Anton 1993, 36).

Despite these women's efforts, at the turn of the twentieth 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 organisations, including the Irish National League – "an open organisation in which the ladies will not take part" (McCoole 2003, 12).

Given that, the activity of mid-nineteenth-century women writers might seem to have been irrelevant at first glance, but this would be a precipitous statement. Their activity in the Irish publishing milieu turned out to be crucial in promoting Irish women's inclusion in politics and public life, because it provided a blueprint for later experiences of female militancy through the print medium. Over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, three periodicals were founded and edited by women determined to further a nationalist, as well as a feminist, political agenda: the Belfast-based *Shan Van Vocht* run by Alice Milligan and Anna Johnston, which often publicised the campaigns of women's groups; *L'Irlande Libre*, i.e. Maud Gonne's radical separatist journal, based in Paris; *Bean na h-Éireann*, a "women's paper, advocat-

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ing militancy, separatism, and feminism" (*BnhÉ* Nov. 1908) that was conceived as the mouthpiece of Inghinidhe na h-Éireann – an organisation of women, including Maud Gonne and Constance Markievicz, who attempted to re-define the cultural, intellectual, and social parameters of Irish society so as to ensure a more prominent role for women. In these pages, they articulated their political demands both as women and as nationalists. These periodicals stemmed from the desire of Irish women "to have a voice in directing the affairs of Ireland", deemed an "inherent right of women as loyal citizens and intelligent human souls", at a time when they could not vote, they were excluded from parliamentary debate, and most nationalist organisations barred them from membership (*BnhÉ* Jan. 1908; cf. Innes 1993, 147). In the autobiographical *A Servant of the Queen*, Maud Gonne laments the restrictions placed on women's political activism in the 1890s by recalling a conversation she had with Timothy Harrington in those days:

> But you don't want women's work. None of the parties in Ireland wants women; the National League, the Fenians, the Celtic Literary Society, the Contemporary Club, have all refused me membership because they accept no women members, so I have to work all by my lone, till I can form a women's organisation. (Gonne 1994, 119)

Harrington sympathetically replied that the nationalists' unenthusiastic attitude towards women's inclusion in public politics stemmed from the common belief that "a woman's place was in the home" (Gonne 1994, 119; Ward 1995b, 44). In the nationalist collective imagination, the woman was the hearthstone of the home and her only acceptable avenue for patriotic contribution to national struggle was via motherhood; within the domestic private sphere, she had to devote all her energy to the task of raising the next generation of nationalist men, who, unlike their mothers, would get involved in public politics.

Smyth and Innes have convincingly argued that Irish nationalism upheld a gendered division of space, based on the binary oppositions public/private and men/women, which had its roots in the representation of Irishwomen in cultural and symbolic repertoires. In nationalist iconography, the home was a shelter, a "warm nest" into which one can withdraw from the chaos of the outside world, and women were given the role of "keepers of the flame" – symbolic bearers of the nation and its traditions. The allegorical representation of the Irish nation as the motherly old woman (the Shan Van Vocht) endorsed this view and enabled nationalists to construct the role of the caring and selfless mother

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sitting by the fireplace as the only appropriate role for women (Innes 1993; Smyth 1995).

Therefore, some female contributors of early-twentieth-century newspapers set out to challenge and negotiate the cultural stereotypes and roles prescribed to women in mainstream nationalist narratives, which deprived them of public agency. The editors and correspondents of *Bean na h-Éireann* were the most committed to favouring women's inclusion in public life and national struggle, by mobilising them from the pages of the monthly. Above all, the readers were urged to express their views on public affairs by sending letters and contributing articles to the paper. Yet, in the plans of Inghinidhe na h-Éireann and hence of *Bean na h-Éireann*'s editorial staff, women's involvement in public dialogue over the *res publica* was just a first step conducive to female participation in nation-building. Determined to achieve greater representation of women in the nationalist movement and enhance women's status in Irish society, the Daughters of Erin concocted their paper as an instrument providing practical guidance for nationalist women (Steele 2007, 111), which popularised a set of strategies devised to grow nationalist awareness among Irishwomen and help them enter the public sphere of political decision-making.

A kernel of these programmes consisted in improving the quality of Irish girls' education (Hay 2012, 149). To increase female involvement in public life, it was crucial to change the mentality of the would-be Irishwomen, by making them aware that they possessed the intellectual and physical strength to give a significant contribution to the process of nation-building. As Gonne pointed out in the essay *The Reward of Serving England*, girls would have "great influence" with their sweethearts and relatives, when they grew to be women; this influence had to be exploited to persuade them that women's activism was a key factor in furthering the national ideal: then, equal citizenship would turn out to be the adequate recompense for their service (*UI* 21 Oct. 1899; cf. Condon 1999, 196; Bobotis 2006, 72). Girls' commitment to nationalism was first reinforced by instilling in them the pride for Irish cultural heritage: ideally, it would spur them to defend the nation against the British oppressor, responsible for uprooting Irish culture. In keeping with this strategy, Inghinidhe na h-Éireann offered free classes of Irish language and history to children, in the hope of counteracting the noxious effects of the integrationist curriculum taught in National Schools (*supra*, chap. 1).

At the same time, Inghinidhe na h-Éireann and its mouthpieces advocated the emergence of home-grown substitutes for the British periodicals intended for juveniles that enjoyed enormous success in early-

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twentieth-century Ireland. As we already know, their hope for Irish periodicals resisting "the deluge of trashy foreign literature in Ireland" (*BnhÉ* Nov. 1909, 4) became real in the 1910s, with the advent of *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *St. Enda's*, and *Young Ireland*. However, except for *Young Ireland*, these periodicals for juveniles proposed some constructions of girlhood in the context of nation-building that were either problematic or dismissively lacunose.

Fianna never explicitly addressed the question of girls' contribution to the nationalist cause, even though, since the 1915 July issue, it featured a column dedicated to both "lads and lassies", which was edited by Neasa, apparently the very same columnist contributing to *Irish Freedom* and *St. Enda's*. *Fianna* purported to be first and foremost a "boys' paper [...] helping educate the youth", that is Ireland's young sons who had to be physically and mentally trained so that "the youth of to-day will be the Volunteers of tomorrow" (*F* Jul. 1915, 2). The investment of the monthly's creators on Irish boys was manifest and reiterated in the periodical subtitle – the misquotation "The Child is Father to the Man" attributed to William Wordsworth – and in the subjects of the fictional content, which included serials like Kinsella's *The Boys of Wexford*. In heavily gendered language, the serial was presented as a "series of complete stories" dealing with "the adventures and trials of a brave band of boys who took part in the fighting of Ninety-Eight", when "Ireland's sons goaded to desperation by oppression, rose to free their country from the rule of England" (*F* Jul. 1915, 11). Furthermore, the addressees of *The Boys of Wexford* were explicitly identified as boys, not girls, because the serial meant to "fill the heart of every boy with admiration for those young fellows who fought so well in '98" (*F* Apr. 1915, 1). Embedded in this statement is the idea that national independence was in the hands of the young male generations, who had to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors – other young men.

On their part, *Our Boys* and *St. Enda's* tended to promulgate conservative gender roles, whereby girls were relegated to an ancillary position if compared to their male peers. If boys were described as the agents of national self-determination and the cornerstones of the future Irish community, girls were encouraged to take on a supporting role: the periodicals promoted an idealised version of girlhood whose appropriate sphere was the home or, alternatively, whose appropriate place was at a boy's side – from there, she could contribute to Ireland's struggle.

Gender conservative standards infiltrated *Our Boys* and *St. Enda's* as they inclined to feature stories depicting girls within a narrow range of cultural stereotypes – the caring sister, the good mother, and the

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altruistic fiancée. By 'altruistic fiancée', it is meant the kind of patriotic girlfriend celebrated in *St. Enda's*, who accepts the sacrifice of her future husband for the nationalist cause even though his death deprives her of a much-deserved happy ending. For instance, in the story *The Broken Trust* by Eibhlin de Paor, a young rebel announces to his sister that her fiancé had died in the Easter Rising in this way: "Máire, he died as you would have wished – proudly for Ireland – and he was happy"; Seán, the brother, expects his sister to burst into tears: but no, she remains "composed and strong" and "all her true, brave soul was in her eyes" (*SE* Mar. 1920, 9-10). In the same line, *St. Enda's* also published an eloquent contribution entitled "The Women of Ireland", in which author Lilian Mary Nally praised the bravery of her female ancestors in the face of "woe and gloom"; she applauded "those valorous women" who "stood steadfast by their brothers at every *berna baoghail* ['in dangerous times'] in their country's story, who have never once complained, who have never wavered even when the fight was fiercest and they saw their loved ones slain". In Nally's piece, girls and women had an ancillary role in that they assisted their male partners: they were the ones who "kept lonely vigil at the prison, the scaffold, and the grave with spartan endurance and heroic fortitude!" (*SE* May 1922, 3).

Portrayals of this kind fitted in with mainstream nationalist iconography, in which "women [were] typically constructed as bearers of the nation" and "denied any relation to national agency" (McClintock 1995, 354; Strachan and Nally 2012, 62). The periodicals confirmed the traditional patriarchal view that Irish girls' role was to support their men in the struggle from the side-lines. The magazines set forth an ancillary role for Irish girls, which, admittedly, was consonant with the portrayal of female contribution to the cause detectable in some women's nationalist discourses – even in discourses promulgated by women's organisations that fought for the recognition of women's rights. For instance, the stated aims of Cumann na mBan presented some problematic remarks regarding gender matters, particularly the posture of the society in relation to the Irish Volunteers. One of Cumann na mBan's aims was "To assist in arming and equipping a body of Irishmen for the defence of Ireland": as noted by Lucy McDiarmid (2015, 6-7), the verb "assist" implies a secondary role for women.

This ancillary role was represented in more blatant tones in *Our Boys* and *St. Enda's* insofar as, in their pages, the true "daughters of Erin" were usually the passive mothers, wives, and lovers of Ireland's sons. Their construction of 'proper motherhood' is particularly redolent of conservative gender ideology. As previously seen, girls' primary acceptable avenue

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for patriotic contribution to Ireland's cause was via motherhood – accordingly, these periodicals celebrated as 'proper' motherhood that maternal care positively affecting the quality of the future generations.

Girls were usually represented as future mothers who had to be morally equipped to handle their future roles of raising young Irishmen and taking care of their physical, educational, and spiritual needs. It was their duty to teach the young boys Ireland' history of oppression so that, one day, they would fight against foreign rule. In this regard, *St. Enda's* used to report an aphorism by Patrick Pearse that casts light on what was expected of either gender:

> 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. (*SE* Aug. 1920, 210-211)

Analogous opinions were voiced by some of the readers who sent in their essays to have them published in the monthly. For instance, a commonality of sentiments between the editors of *St. Enda's* and their readers is apparent in the essay handed in by a Maureen Shannon from County Clare: in her "Women of our Race", besides celebrating "the brave Anne Devlin", Maureen claimed that "an untold debt of gratitude" was owed "to all the unselfish Irish mothers" and "the patient, gentle Irish nuns". Despite being keenly aware of the potential of contemporary young women, who were finally "free to enter the professions", Maureen valued in girls those character traits like moral probity, "spotless purity", "deep religious faith", and a mothering instinct that made them feel "tender compassion" for the oppressed and the weak, thus revealing her adherence to deep conservative values that idealised the figures of the mother and the nun (*SE* Mar. 1920, 9-10).

Our Boys was likewise conservative with relation to gender matters, and similarly idealised the figure of the mother. As devotees of the cult of the Virgin Mary, the contributors to *Our Boys* filled in its pages with prayers to the Mother of Jesus Christ and glorifications of 'nationalist, Catholic maternity'. Motherhood was politicised and celebrated as the way of providing the nation with healthy children in mainstream nationalist discourses – an understanding of maternity fully endorsed by *Our Boys*, which was used to reminding its young readers that it was "by the influence of holy mothers, [that] the minds and hearts of our Irish children have been kept remarkably pure" (*OB* Jan. 1916, 143; cf. Bobotis 2006, 64). "Pure" means untainted by Anglicisation and met-

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ropolitan tendencies, namely the corrupting forces in early-twentieth-century Ireland that deeply scared the Christian Brothers. The main duty of any good Irish mother was to protect her children from these sources of corruption by bringing them up along sanctioned nationalist and Catholic lines. In this regard, the transmission of Gaelic knowledge from mother to son was deemed efficacious in opposing strong resistance to alien trends. Evidence of this is contained in the short story *Shameen's Luck*, which identified the good Irish mother as the woman who "was so loving, so patient and so brave" with her children, and "told them stories, always in the soft western Gaelic" – she told her children "tales of the ancient days when Ireland was great and prosperous and free". These tales imbued with nationalist values would eventually fuel the children's patriotism and trigger their thirst for freedom (*OB* Mar. 1916, 194-196).

The stance of *Our Boys* was undeniably redolent of the conservatism of the Catholic Church, which also permeated girls' traditional education in Ireland. As argued by Anne 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 wife and mother, with corresponding emphasis on the accomplishments and social graces" (1986, 88).

The editors of *Our Boys* were aware of the changes occurring in the twentieth century about women's role in society (see *Fig. 2*), but looked at them with scorn, as exemplified by a 1917 passage from *The World's News*. Despite being conveyed through the prism of irony, the message was uncompromising in its contempt for women stepping out of traditional roles.

> Among the revolutions of war is the insurgence of women into spheres 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 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. (*OB* Oct. 1917, 36)

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Figure 2. – Detail of the cartoon "England in Wartime" from *Our Boys* (April 1916, 130). During the First World War, large numbers of women were recruited into jobs vacated by men who had left for the front, and female participation in the workforce ended up challenging orthodox gender conventions. Here, this cartoon from *Our Boys* makes fun of English women 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 of traditional roles. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (K504).

This stance was not contested by the periodical's youthful readers, not even by the female ones. 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". (*OB* Oct. 1916, 33)

Sent by a Miss Molly Gallagher from Londonderry, the joke offers a stereotypical portrait of the blue-stocking woman, a far cry from the matronly

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ideal. It leaves 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 in the accompanying cartoon with eyeglasses and short-cropped hair. The cartoon pits the modern lifestyle against an embodiment of traditional Irish womanhood. I argue that underpinning the satire of the 'the blue-stocking woman' were conservatory attitudes to the roles of women and girls in Irish society. The girl seems to suffer from a high notion of her importance, whereas her rejection of traditional femininity does not help the cause because, by remaining unmarried, the modern girl fails in her patriotic duty to maintain culture and tradition through her offspring. The stereotype of the 'the blue-stocking woman' is thus used as a convenient symbol to represent non-conforming women, whose demands are sneered at by the creator of the joke.

Few voices spoke up against this *status quo*, among them Neasa when contributing to *Irish Freedom*. From the pages of *Irish Freedom*, which extolled "boys of manly resolve and iron determination" relegating Irish girls to the side-line of the struggle for national self-determination (*IF* Sept. 1911, 7), 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. (*IF* Jul. 1912, 3)

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 demanded that girls started 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 the 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? (*IF* Jul. 1912, 3)

The model would be that of the Boer young girls who "fought nobly and fearlessly". Neasa went 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 stated – 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" (*IF* Aug. 1912, 3). Unfortunately, none of these

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letters was published. We only gather that there was, though, someone not so optimistic about the project, because Neasa rebuked him: "Aren't you rather severe on us poor women?", she asked (*IF* Sept. 1912, 3).

Approval of women participating in active combat was also voiced by the mysterious "Southwoman", author of the article "To the Young Women of Ireland", which was published in *Irish Freedom* in 1913. Here, Southwoman strove to demonstrate that women could bear arms for Ireland's cause, arguing that women were able to 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. Her contribution was the virulent reply to an article published in the previous issue, specifically an appeal to the young men of Ireland, as the title makes clear and by admission of the Southwoman as well (*IF* Nov. 1913, 3; cf. Ward 1995b, 91). It hardly represented a majority view among the contributors of the paper. Incidentally, even Nic Chearbhaill and *Young Ireland* seemed to just mildly endorse this policy of active combat for girls and women, rather advocating non-violent forms of contribution for Irish girls. Yet the first step for *Young Ireland* was to suggest that national self-determination was not the exclusive domain of men and boys. In this respect, two main sets of strategies were enacted.

First, Sinn Féin's periodical featured stories with empowering female models that dismantled the image of the girl in a subservient position. Second, Nic Chearbhaill and the other contributors explained to their double readership, comprising the youngsters and their parents, that women and girls' demands to take an active and public role in the long struggle for national self-determination should have not been judged unusual. Nic Chearbhaill fell back to Irish ancient history to point out that female presence in the realm of the public was a true expression of essential Ireland – a feature differentiating Ireland from its colonial masters.

In all her contributions to the *Cailin's Column*, Nic Chearbhaill endeavoured to instil in her readers the sense that they had a country of their own, and a separate cultural identity different from, and apart from, England. Ireland's distinct cultural and national identity was highlighted through articles about literature, history, and politics, charting the glories of ancient Gaelic civilisation. Regarding women and girls' status in society, she claims that old Gaelic Ireland was far in advance of twentieth-century England, for in that prelapsarian world women were "given the same rights, privileges and political dignities as men" (*YI* 21 Apr. 1917, 7). In the same line, when Britain granted the right to vote to women, she mockingly commented that "women have been

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granted votes by the English Parliament, which is thus rapidly reaching the stage of civilisation that prevailed in Ireland a few odd thousand years ago" (*YI* 7 Jul. 1917, 4). Adopting as evaluating criterion the belief that "the fineness and nobility of a country's civilisation is always indicated by the position that women hold in it" (*YI* 21 Apr. 1917, 7), she decreed the superiority of old Gaelic civilisation, basing her argument on Crissie Doyle's essay *Women in Ancient and Modern Ireland*, duly advertised in the pages of *Young Ireland*. Praised for shedding light on "the leading part our ancestresses played in Irish public life" (*YI* 2 Jun. 1917, 8), the essay identified a number of prelapsarian golden, or quasi-golden, ages for women in Irish history. Doyle extolled the Gaelic society under the Brehon laws of Early Medieval and Early Modern Ireland, whereby the law operated for the benefit of both genders. Rather than being a matriarchal society, Brehon society was egalitarian, insofar as, within this law system, women held property rights, were allowed to inherit money and land, could maintain their own property and land, and could divorce without the judgement of the Church (Knox 2004, 16). Moreover, every profession to which men in Ancient Ireland could aspire was freely open to women as well, including soldiering (Doyle 1917, 15-16).

Nic Chearbhaill's attention to Ireland's past originated from the interest in Irish history that had informed women's organisations such as Inghinidhe na h-Éireann since their inception. In the light of Irish history, they could justify the mingling of nationalism with women's issues and claims, alongside their depiction of Ireland's independence from Westminster as the *conditio sine qua non* for women's emancipation. From the pages of the *Irish Citizen*[1], Sidney Gifford, who wrote under the name of John Brennan, spurred the Irish to support the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin, because they were attempting to rebuild the Gaelic civilisation in which "the woman was the equal of the man in all" (*IC* 14 Sept. 1915, 131; cf. Pašeta 2013, 108). In their discourses, a longing for the lost Gaelic world squares with the condemnation of the anglicising forces affecting Ireland. An article published in the 1909 April issue of *Bean na h-Éireann* thus reads:

> Until some thousand years or so ago the Irishman was good enough to reckon the Irishwoman his equal, and until one century ago looked upon

[1] The brainchild of Francis Sheehy Skeffington who co-edited it with James H. Cousins, the *Irish Citizen* was first published in May 1912 and ceased publication in 1920. The weekly carried a decidedly gender-equal motto: "For men and women equally the Rights of Citizenship. For men and women equally the Duties of Citizenship". The *Irish Citizen* campaigned for equal citizenship and women's enfranchisement.

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> her as a trifle his inferior. His rapid progress in Anglicisation since then imbued him with the manly belief that "women's sphere" – sphere is the correct and blessed word – is providing him with food to eat and money to spend in cooling himself when he grows warm when discussing the best means of showing God Almighty how to run the earth. (*BnhÉ* Apr. 1909, 7)

A month later, in the same periodical, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington likewise commented that "the disabilities Irishwomen suffer today" – for instance, the fact that the bride's portion of inheritance belongs irrevocably to the husband's family – are partly "the result of Anglicisation" (*BnhÉ* May 1909, 8). Nic Chearbhaill, in her review of James Connolly's *Labour in Ireland*, claims that the author's attacks on "the greedy mercenary spirit born of the system of capitalist property" imported from Britain, which oppressed women the most, "show something of the rival ideals of the Gael and of Anglicization where women are concerned" (*YI* 8 Sept. 1917, 5). As Pašeta has convincingly argued (2013, 100), by demonstrating that free Ireland had upheld gender equality and women's active role in the public, Irish nationalist women implied that their inferior social and political position in early-twentieth-century Ireland had to be blamed on British rule; similarly, the notion that a woman's place was within the domestic sphere was a British construction imposed on its sister-kingdom. The logical consequence was that any person committed to restoring Ireland to its past splendours would fight for women's emancipation as well.

This equation, however, was not put forward by all the women contributing to the Irish periodical press. Some authoresses resorted to the image of Golden-Age Ireland to different ends – mainly to prove that Ireland's destiny was not necessarily one of submission to foreign rulers. They contended that a future, independent Ireland might as well prosper as the Ireland of the pre-Conquest times had done. This was asserted, among others, by Neasa at the time of her collaboration with *St. Enda's*. In an instalment of her nook, she alluded to some essays by nationalist historian Alice Stopford Green about Ireland's glorious past, when the nation was a thriving and cultured "country of organised industry", "with its own language and Latin letters". In her piece, Neasa emphasised the fact that Ireland used to have a primary role in the European context, with the intention to persuade the youthful readers of *St. Enda's* that the Ireland of the Golden Age could be successfully reinstated – Neasa commented that "surely 'the dawn is near'" – through the work of the youngest generations of boys. Neasa reminded her readers that there had "always" been "warriors in Eirinn when the need for strong arms and stout hearts arose", but, significantly, these

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ISSN 2283-5628 - ISBN 978-88-7916-951-6 - https://www.ledonline.it/index.php/LCM-journal/pages/view/LCM-series

had invariably been men: history taught the Irish that ancient "Ireland was a land of heroes", who were "mighty men of martial mould". The women of the past are referenced only in a passing remark, in which it is said that prelapsarian Ireland was inhabited by "fair women, meet partners for the warriors, chiefs and statesmen of the older race" (*SE* Jul. 1918, 77).

In this brief comment, even though she sang the praises of these women, who were worthy companions of their partners, Neasa did not venture to propose that the future, independent Ireland would have to recognize gender equality. Nor did she blame contemporary women's lot on English oppression. Although she never simplistically reproduced the periodical's ideology with regard to gender matters, today's readers may have the impression that, when writing for *St. Enda's*, Neasa watered down the subversive content of her assertions. In *St. Enda's* we do not find those clarion calls to active combat that she issued from the pages of *Irish Freedom*: presumably, when contributing to the juvenile magazine, she toned down her assertions in an attempt to compromise between her ambition to challenge contemporary gender norms and a desire to please readers and publishers.

All in all, women's interest in Ireland's past had evident political implications. It was a reservoir into which women contributors could selectively tap to different, multiple ends. If Neasa resorted to it to prove Ireland's right to independence, nationalist feminist activists investigated their national history, on the one hand, to justify women's right to emancipation and, on the other, to legitimise women's presence in the public realm and their contemporary claims of equality. In Ireland's mythical and historical past, Nic Chearbhaill and her contemporaries found empowering alternatives to imperial and patriarchal models of femininity who had contributed to the national struggle. *Shan Van Vocht*, *Bean na h-Éireann*, the *Irish Citizen*, and *Young Ireland* constantly featured articles detailing of mythical and epic Irish heroines, because they helped to dismantle expectations about women's supposedly rightful place in the private domestic sphere (Steele 2007, 83-84). In May 1909, for instance, *Bean na h-Éireann* devoted a full-page article to Saint Brigid – "The Mary of the Gaels" *Young Ireland* defined her – who was extolled by Maud Gonne as "the quintessence of wisdom at the service of the nation" (*BnhÉ* May 1909, 7).

Committed to recording Irishwomen's history, Nic Chearbhaill likewise attempted at an early form of 'herstory' by constructing a genealogy of nationalist women who fought for Ireland or strove to ameliorate the living conditions of Irish people. She invited her readers to honour and

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emulate empowered women like the mythical Queen Maeve, Margaret O'Carroll of Ely, and Betsy Grey, better known as "the Irish Joan of Arc" (*YI* 28 Apr. 1917, 7). Her genealogy also included the names of some "great women in our own days", so that *Young Ireland*'s readers would not view women's contribution to the nationalist struggle as exclusively belonging to the past. The more relatable contemporary women were "Madam Markievicz, Lady Gregory, Mrs Helena Concannon and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington" (*YI* 12 May 1917, 7), who were then fomenting nationalist awareness and fighting for national self-determination. Here, of great significance is the inclusion in the list of Countess Markievicz, as she was a sort of poster woman for girls' nationalist activism. The previous year, she had taken part in the military operations of the Easter Rising as a co-commander: she did not assume that secondary role the other periodicals for juveniles ascribed to women and girls alike, being an instance of this Maureen Shannon's praise of "the brave women of Limerick", who had not left the sieged city "but remained to encourage and help their menfolk" (*SE* Mar. 1920, 10).

Nic Chearbhaill, however, did not limit herself to providing her readership with a gallery of empowering models, as she did not want her readers to passively absorb pre-formed political and cultural ideas about femininity and Irishness. She organised essay-competitions on topics such as "My Irish Heroine" and "What girls can do for Ireland" as to encourage the girls to discuss women and girls' proper role in society and in the long anti-colonial struggle, while presenting their own notions of femininity. In Nic Chearbhaill's view, they would ultimately join the debate about Irish identity, when it was at its most intense. Far from remaining the objects or recipients of national definitions, girls would become their originators.

The semantics of agency is recurrently employed by Nic Chearbhaill, for her objective was to debunk the myth that male agency was the only one possible in the public sphere. At the same time, she tried to demonstrate that girls, by performing everyday actions – even by doing their household chores – could have an impact on Irish public life. Nic Chearbhaill overcomes the divide between private and public spheres at the very moment when she seems to advocate a conservative (Victorian) ideal of woman – the woman as a repository of Irish culture, confined to household management. She demonstrates that everyday tasks like household chores could entail participation in the public sphere if aptly turned into political weapons of resistance against British rule. This new way of representing and conceiving household management, eventually, would pose a challenge to conservative gender norms.

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4.3. Blurred boundaries

Nationalist women soon realised that different forms of militancy could coexist profitably in their attempts to revise the orthodox nationalist ideology about women's proper place and role in Irish society. They started believing that militarism could be enhanced by a domestic form of activism, which purported to transform everyday tasks into political weapons for subversive ends (cf. Steele 2007, 111). As previously observed, the Irish home came to be valued and idealised as a repository of the traditional cultural and moral values of the nation and its hearthstone was the woman, who, with proper maternal fosterage, could engender a national awakening of their children to their Irish cultural identity (Condon 1999, 195). A wide array of political pamphlets, speeches, and letters produced by the nationalist movement promoted a conservative gender politics, which was endorsed also by some women members. In 1901, Mary E.L. Butler, a propagandist for the Gaelic League, published the pamphlet *Women and the Home Language*, which condemned women's active participation in politics, whether on the public platform or in military activity. Butler preferred to endorse the League's more conservative ideology of separate spheres, for while she encouraged women to welcome their role at the "hearthstone", she derided those who sought the active and more public role as "shrieking viragoes" and "aggressive amazons". Extolling motherhood, she suggested that "the characters of the future citizens of the country" were to be "built up in the chimney corner" following the lessons of patriotic women, and that "the spark struck on the hearthstone" would thus "fire the soul of the nation" (qtd. in Quinn 1997, 41; cf. Condon 1999, 195).

Those women who aspired to a more active role in the public sphere, including Nic Chearbhaill, compelled themselves to speak the language of mainstream nationalism, imbibing its prejudices relating to women's role in society, as to finally subvert them. In their papers, far from describing domestic work as inferior and less important than civic work, they represented women's work in the home as the decisive factor for the cultural regeneration of Ireland (Pašeta 2013, 23). Women and girls were told how usual domestic actions – the typical chores of a housewife like buying food for the pantry and clothes for the family members – could become forms of political resistance. In *Bean na h-Éireann*, Markievicz illustrated how Irish women could "Live Really Irish Lives" by boycotting English imports and organising themselves to collectively buy Irish goods, while wearing Irish clothes and eating Irish produce (Steele 2007, 114). In the same line, Nic Chearbhaill encouraged her

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readers to buy Irish products only – like the West Coast Moss grown in Gaelic-speaking Ireland –, wear typical Connemara dresses, and invite their "elder brothers" to do the same (cf. *YI* 16 Jun. 1917, 72).

From the pages of *Bean na h-Éireann*, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington criticized the Countess's appeal, commenting that, by focusing on domestic work, women were recognized not as comrades but rather as mothers and housekeepers, thus buttressing the ideology of separate spheres (*BnhÉ* Nov. 1909; Steele 2007, 111). However, Sheehy Skeffington underestimated the subversive element in the Countess's strategy. Although shopping may nowadays appear like a frivolous activity, in the Ireland of the beginning of the twentieth century – under British rule – it was rather demanding. Buying Irish not only required a great deal of time and effort, but it was also a public statement, because one's purchases often came to reveal one's political leanings: ordinary life, the everyday tasks women performed, became political (Pašeta 2013, 22-23).

Moreover, collectively done – the Countess urged women to organize themselves in groups – these actions related to household management could have an impact on Irish economy. The collective aspect of these habitual actions favoured the shift from a private dimension only to a public one. Buying Irish in a group implied participation in private and public life. In her invitations to buy Irish produce in the pages of *Young Ireland*, Nic Chearbhaill was careful to emphasize the importance of performing everyday tasks together. She encouraged her readers to collectively buy Irish moss of the West Coast, a sort of jelly then used in cooking or as a medicine. When her readers promptly reacted, she thanked and informed them that their actions had had positive repercussions on a whole region: "This large burst of interest shows that there is an opening for a big trade to be developed [...] If a good trade were established, it would mean a considerable flow of money into the Gaeltacht – a most desirable state of affairs" (*YI* 23 Jun. 1917, 4). Her concluding remarks that "as much as the girl of Ireland are able to have an effect on Irish economy so they can affect Irish politics" well exemplify her belief that even a mundane activity like shopping could launch girls into further political activity (*YI* 23 Jun. 1917, 4; cf. also Pašeta 2003, 23).

As discussed in Chapter Two, campaigns in support of local, industries of kindred character were common to all the periodicals for juveniles. It is noteworthy, therefore, that only in *Young Ireland*, the autarchic drives led to the appreciation of girls' agency. In a long opinion article in which the contributors to *Fianna* spurred their readers to "do something practical for Ireland", it stands out that the task of support-

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ing "Irish manufacturers" was repeatedly referred to as the duty of any "patriotic Irishman" (*F* Dec. 1915, 16).

Not so in *Young Ireland*, which claimed that, from their home and by performing everyday tasks, women and girls could not only exert economic and political influence, but also get involved in public life at last. The campaign for inviting women to learn and teach Irish is emblematic about the women's nationalist belief that accomplishing common tasks could facilitate other women's inclusion in the public sphere. Considering women as the repository of the ancient Gaelic culture and the Irish language, nationalist propaganda – including Butler's essay – spurred women to learn Irish and teach it to their own children. For Nic Chearbhaill and her contemporaries transforming this private task into a public endeavour was crucial; they managed to do so, while struggling to challenge the role of the nurturing mother, the caring woman admired by the conservative nationalist propaganda, through an act of negotiation. Altruism, self-abnegation, mothering, and nurturing skills were deemed to be the feminine qualities *par excellence*: now, these feminine qualities had to be used in the service of national freedom and female emancipation. Relying on their abilities to deal with children, on their distinctive patience and propensity to caring, Nic Chearbhaill's readers – as we gather from her articles – should spend their holidays in Donegal learning Irish and acquiring the necessary skills to teach it (*YI* 30 Jun. 1917, 8). Yet they were also supposed to teach it also to children who did not belong to their own family, outside the domestic circle. Besides promoting the study of Irish lore and language – thus discouraging interest in English culture – by performing these tasks many girls could have the opportunity to discover their talents in public speaking and as teachers. They could realize that they had skills and talents which should be further utilised; one of the aims of these women writing for other women and young girls was to make the latter aware that they were fit for the public space.

The bottom line was simple: "Ireland belongs to Irish girls as well as to Irish boys" (*YI* 20 Oct. 1917, 6).

4.4. Concluding remarks: contested girlhood and ideal boyhood

The emergence of the periodicals for juveniles came at a time when discourses about girls and women's role in society and in the nationalist

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struggle were evolving and being contested. It was also a period when the idealisation of women as mothers and conservative views on gender matters were still widespread. It was still commonly believed that the Irish boys, not girls, were the ones who would later actively fight for Ireland's freedom and prosperity.

This belief was mirrored in papers like *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, and *St. Enda's* that tended to promulgate conservative gender roles by featuring stories whereby girls were relegated to an ancillary position compared to their male counterparts. The general dismissive take on the theme 'Irish girl and nationalist struggle' in these three periodicals is nonetheless interesting in that it was counterbalanced by an inordinate amount of fictional and non-fictional writings relating boys' feats. Boys were regarded as the main agents of the pursuit of Irish independence and as the cornerstone of the future Irish nation; this political investment came to justify and beget the daunting effort of nationalists to put forward the ideal of Irish boy amply discussed and multifariously presented to Ireland's youth by all the periodicals.

The story papers assisted the nationalists in the formation of a new ideal of boyhood – strong, manly, and committed to the cause. The next chapter traces the contours of the idealised masculinity often embodied by the young Gaelic athlete. The objective is to show how the periodicals concocted a model boy characterized by political commitment, intellectual and physical vigour, 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" (McDevitt 2004, 18).

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5.
Ideals of Boyhood

> These two incidents make it clear that England is absolutely unfitted for self-government.
>
> *Young Ireland* 11 Aug. 1917, 1

> I am an Eton boy. One Eton boy is worth a thousand foreigners. Single-handed, I will face the Empire's foes, and beat them.
>
> *Young Ireland* 17 Nov. 1917, 6

> From your future efforts, boys, Comes a nation's destiny.
>
> *Our Boys* May 1918, 215

5.1. Stereotyping the Irish boy

The present chapter takes its starting point in the satirical cartoon "The Shoneen" (see *Fig. 3*). Published in *Young Ireland*, this cartoon is worthy of analysis because it bears witness to the cultural construction of genuine Irishness that was ongoing, both in Ireland and in Britain, between the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. In turn, the appreciation of the reasons and outlooks that informed British and Irish discourses on Irishness is essential to understand why a specific image of ideal boyhood came into existence at this time.

At first glance, it is clear how the cartoonist exaggerated certain facial and bodily features of the boy in the foreground, such as: the roundness of the face, which is almost geometrical; the curve of the nose, so uplifted 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, which is too slim. Hardly can we gauge the impact of this cartoon on the original readers of *Young Ireland* but is quite safe to assume that its superficial 'message' was generally understood by its consuming public.

Monks's cartoon is first and foremost a caricature of the *shoneen*, that is an Irish person who was said to ape the manners and affectations of the English.

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Figure 3. – Cartoon "The Shoneen" by George Monks. It was published in *Young Ireland* on the 5th of May 1917, 3. Author's collection.

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 derision often served as an outlet for national resentment against Anglicisation (Beatty 2016, 25). The bowler hat, the black suit, and the white lapdog alone are indicative of the character's *shoneenism* – its preference of British imported attitudes, manners, and products over their Irish equivalents. This impression is then confirmed by the addition of a caption that facilitates the process of identification of the boy with a *shoneen*. The cartoon can therefore be read within the wider framework of the periodical's war on Anglicisation: this unflattering portrayal makes the *shoneen* an object of ridicule rather than a model to imitate. Could Irish boys want to become ugly, 'sissy' dandies?

There are yet other levels of meaning inscribed into the picture to be decoded considering the cultural and historical context of the cartoon's production. Comic art of the kind reproduced here, to take recourse to Lewis Perry Curtis's insightful observations, "involves a reciprocal relationship between those who create it and those who consume it"; in other words, cartoonists do not work in splendid isolation, but draw on the culture and society that surround them. On the one hand, this art is

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thick with clues to the social and political dynamics of each cartoonist's specific time and culture, and, on the other, it is fuelled by the fears, biases, and prejudices that already circulate among the artist's audience (Curtis 1997, x-xi). Hence, 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, clues relating to the anxieties that haunted the minds of Irish nationalists at this time [1].

The boy's depiction is uncomplimentary, and he is placed in stark physiognomic opposition to the group of boys in the background 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. Yet, the hybridity of the young anglophile also functions as a convenient counterfoil for imagining the ideal Irish youthful body. Besides denoting a preference for British fashion over Irish-made clothing, the *shoneen*'s flabby attire arguably conceals underdeveloped muscles as well as an effeminate, weak body. For this reason, the cartoon is not only a disparagement of the *shoneen* but is also reflective of the nationalists' endeavours to purge the Irish male image of any feminine or childlike element. At a subtler level, it displayed that political sovereignty was crucially interrelated with healthy bodily normality (cf. Beatty 2016, 59).

There is a connection between the strong, proportionate bodies of the boys in the background and the apprehensions of many Irish nationalists about the possible physical degeneration of the boys and men of the early 1900s. Ideas on physical fitness and manliness in connection with patriotism were under constant revision between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Anxieties about the decline of manhood were common across Europe at this time, so they kept surfacing in social and political discourses (Sisson 2003, 9). Baden-Powell's Scout movement itself emerged in late nineteenth-century England mainly to dispel anxieties of national degeneracy concerning British youth and ultimately

[1] I would like to acknowledge my debt to the studies of Lewis Perry Curtis, which constitute the basis of this 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 Pittock (1999) and Nelson (2012).

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prevent the fall of the British Empire (Hay 2011, 441; cf. also Pick 1989).

Nonetheless, although the concerns of the Irish nationalists may be productively placed in a transnational context, because anxieties about human degenerations were widespread throughout all Europe, one should not forget that Irish nationalism had reasons of its own to be more anxious than most about a possible decline in manhood (Sisson 2003, 9). To understand the peculiarity of Irish nationalists' fears is necessary to place them in the broader frame of the discourses of Imperialism, of bestialising and, regarding the interconnected feminisation of Irishmen, of Celticism.

At the turn of the century, Irish men were spurred to assert a dignified self-image in opposition to a whole gamut of discourses that categorised them as, at various times, barbarians, apes, effeminate, immature, but always inferior and defective (Beatty 2016, 6). The British had implemented, on the one hand, the feminising discourse of Celticism, and, on the other, the bestialising discourse of siminianisation, which cooperated in representing the Irish as racially deficient in manhood and so unfit for political/legislative independence (Valente 2011, 11). At times, also the charge of infantilization, which is another facet of this supposed deficiency in manhood, was employed to justify the imperial mission.

According to John Gillingham, the bestialised vision of the Irish as ignoble savages originated in the attitudes and writings of medieval Englishmen. One should look to the Ireland of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries if wishing to uncover the origins of these imperialist and stereotyping attitudes towards the Irish (Gillingham 1987, 18-22; cf. also Canny 2001). 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 this 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" (qtd. in Leersen 1996, 37). 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 was to become the British standard view of Irish people, as his works still circulated both in Latin and English in the seventeenth century and his images of the Irish as a savage and barbarous

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people were reiterated in the Early Modern texts of Edmund Spenser and Fynes Moryson (de Nie 2004, 5).

More importantly, later authors retrieved from the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis the notion that, since the Irish were barbarians, their dispossession was legitimated. The bestialising of the Irish underlay the 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, the syllogism embedded in the words of Giraldus Cambrensis was made explicit and conducive to military action in the bull *Laudabiliter* (1155) by which Pope Hadrian IV granted Ireland to Henry II "to the end that 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" (Gillingham 1987, 19; Cairns and Richards 1988, 4).

The image of the barbarous Irish gained prominence with *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596) by Edmund Spenser, who built on Giraldus's assumptions. Staged as a dialogue between an Englishman of moderate opinions, Eudoxus, and the Irish colonist Irenius, Spenser's text has been considered as a blueprint for the military subjugation and 'Englishing' of Ireland due to its effort to demonstrate the necessity for early modern settlers to anglicise the natives before the opposite process took place: hence the appeal for making the Gaels forget about their Irish nation because, if they remembered their society before the occupation, they would resist the British usurpers' plans (O'Connor 2006, xv and 3). An unmistakable racial edge emerges in the defamatory remarks about Gaelic customs as barbarous "Scotes or Scythian" remnants that served to highlight the unbridgeable gulf between the barbarity of the Gaels and the civilization of the English: for instance, indigenous Irish women were denigrated to the point of being accused of suckling the blood of their enemies. And, as the only possible solution for keeping Ireland as a colony, Spenser advocated the erasure of Irish culture through Anglicisation [2].

[2] Noonan offers a more nuanced view on Spenser's opinion, as she attributes the most destructive and long-lasting effects on English perception of the Irish to Sir Temple's *The Irish Rebellion*. Temple provided his readers with a portrait of the two peoples, English and Irish, as essentially and permanently incompatible. Published in 1646, *The Irish Rebellion* was a departure from the Tudor and early Stuart canon on Ireland, because "while Temple borrowed much from earlier commentators such as Edmund Spenser", his analysis "set out in a new direction by defining the Irish as ethnically distinct" (Noonan 2004, 224).

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The barbarity of indigenous people functioned 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, which was the prevalent mode of acquiring knowledge emerging with the sixteenth century (Foucault 1970, 55), to explain the purport of English writing about Ireland and its inhabitants. In their view, it 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 as a touchstone to define the qualities of 'Englishness', by simultaneously defining 'not-Englishness' or 'Otherness' (Cairns and Richards 1988, 2; cf. Colley 1992).

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 where peoples were "the very antitheses of their new rulers from overseas": since the late sixteenth century, when Edmund Spenser wrote *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, the English had 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" (Kiberd 1996, 9).

This type of stereotyping the Irish did not end in the Early Modern Age. In his inquiry of the role of ethnic prejudice in Anglo-Irish relations titled *Anglo-Saxons and Celts* ([1968] 1999), Lewis Perry Curtis was the first to argue that many respectable intellectuals of the Romantic Age, as well as many Victorians, believed in the 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 opposing Roman Catholicism. More specifically, according to Curtis, they were persuaded that cultural and behavioural differences between themselves and the Irish were originated in hereditary – or racial – differences. The numerous Victorian cartoons of Irish rebels with ape-like faces, limbs, and bodies provide evidence of the widespread assumptions about the physical inferiority of the native Irish held by the English. Indeed, the notion of racial asymmetry kept surfacing in the writing of eminent and educated Victorians like Charles Kingsley, who regarded the Catholic Irish as alien in race and inferior in culture to the Anglo-Saxons.

When travelling across Ireland, Kingsley was stunned by the level of deprivation and bestial appearance of the Irish whom he encountered. He described to his wife the miserable wretches he saw walking by the roadside in injurious terms: "to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they

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were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except when tanned by exposure, are as white as ours" (1882, 107; Curtis 1968, 84). In *Hereward the Wake*, he wrote of the Irish: "ill-armed and almost naked, they were as perfect in the arts of forest warfare as those Maoris whom they so much resemble". 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 (qtd. in Curtis 1968, 140).

Likewise, Samuel T. Coleridge's journalistic writings on English policy in Ireland retained many of his predecessors' insights, for he commented 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" (qtd. in Deane 1983, 6-8).

Moreover, in addition to drawing on stereotypical representations that dated back to the twelfth century, the Victorians articulated and promoted the feminization of the Irish. The discourse of Celticism provides us with a clue to the reasons underlying the portrayal of Irishness as feminine, which came into existence in the mid-nineteenth century. In the wake of Seamus Deane's studies on the theories of Matthew Arnold, my attention is devoted to the word 'Celtic' and the way it was used in the Victorian Age, when the author of *Culture and Anarchy* charged it with a political resonance bound to highlight, in later discourses, 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*, which drew heavily on his own series of Oxford lectures, delivered in 1865 in his capacity as a professor of poetry. Both the lectures and the essay placed emphasis on the importance of a disinterested study of Celtic literature, painted as the vehicle to help to transform the complex Anglo-Celtic relationship in a fruitful interracial symbiosis (O'Connor 2006, xv and 25).

In this influential work, Arnold suggested that the Celt could supply to England what its middle classes lacked and *vice versa* (O'Connor 2006, xv). 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,

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> 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 self-dependence; but it is a temperament for which one has a kind of sympathy notwithstanding. (Arnold [1867] 2001, 109)

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" (Arnold [1867] 2001, 108).

Moreover, according to Arnold, Celtic Literature had a "Titanic" element which was the sentiment fuelling the peculiar genius of the Celts. This statement echoed those already expressed by Renan [3], who, combining praise and deprecation, had asserted that the Celts were intoxicated with supernal beauty and an "invincible need of illusion", which alienated them from the "cheerful but commonplace" lives of their neighbours and made them fundamentally incapable of adapting to the compromise of realpolitik (O'Connor 2006, 19). 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 (Kiberd 1996, 30).

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. Discourses on Irish effeminacy and bestiality, which prevailed in Victorian Britain, served in equal measure to highlight that Irish nationalism contained no legitimate goals, mirroring instead the unchecked urges of an immature people (Valente 2011, 11). Political dependence on Britain was justified also by portraying the Irish as children in need of control. In *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*, Curtis observes that "one of the favourite ascriptions of Englishmen and

[3] Arnold would frequently return to Irish questions in later years. In 1878, he contributed the essay "Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism" to the *Fortnightly Review* edited by John Morley, and, 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 *Sur la poésie des races celtiques*, from which he drew many insights. For instance, Arnold's arguments on the complementarity between the Celts and the English found 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 (Wallace 2012, 206-207; cf. O'Connor 2006, 25).

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women about the Irish concerned their childlike qualities" as, in their view, children needed guidance and firm hand, which only British rule could guarantee (1999, 53). Curtis supplies a good example of this anti-Irish stereotype by reporting the impressions of Edith Balfour about her week's tour in the west of Ireland. Balfour, 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 who takes care of the Irish 'children':

> 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. (qtd. in Curtis 1999, 53)

As evidenced by Balfour's example, racial discourse could be superficially sympathetic. Representations of the Irish varied throughout time, being dependent on the political and social conditions of the moment (Nelson 2012, 6). Nonetheless, sympathetic or unsympathetic, hostile or benign, those views of the Irish pointed to their unfitness to self-government because of supposed deficiency in manhood. Irrationality, lack of control, and irresponsibility sharply differentiated the politically able from the unable.

Irish nationalists had to come to terms with these stereotypes, which labelled them as barbarians, 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 (Lyons 1960, 15), but for too long a period the images of the defective bodies of Irish males – too feminine, too immature, or ape-like – had proliferated so that they had stamped themselves indelibly on the minds of English and Irish readers alike.

Hence, these stereotypes affected the Irish nationalists in the construction of an ideal of boyhood which was then propagated by the periodicals intended for juveniles. As the next subchapters will show, the nationalists operated within the discourses of stereotyped Irishness to set forth their ideal boy-persona.

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5.2. How to forge the ideal boy: the restoration of Gaelic pastimes

The Irish resented the stereotypes concocted by the English but, at the same time, they had fully introjected them. The excerpt below gives us an insight into the psychological introjection of these typecasts, which ultimately begot the representations and discursive practices about ideal boyhood mirrored, forged, and spread by the periodicals.

> 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 constitute 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 [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. (*IF* May 1911, 7)

Through recurring assertions of Irish racial purity and manliness (exemplified by the passage "our racial heritage of physique"), the quote from *Irish Freedom* is illustrative of the fears that haunted the minds of the Irish in the decades around the Easter Rising. Embedded, but not explicitly stated, is the notion that Ireland's male youths had been emasculated by the subtle, pervasive Anglicisation of any facets of Irish culture and life, including pastime activities. No longer playing the indigenous games, the Irish boys had become physically deficient and further deprived of any connection to the genuine national spirit. Similarly, George Monks, the creator of the cartoon "The Shoneen", was not oblivious to the negative stereotypes created under British rule, whereby the Irish were depicted as childlike or effeminate people. Fears of deficiency in manhood infiltrated the cartoon, as the boy in the foreground

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stands out as the graphic emblem of just how far the young Irish man could degenerate into childishness and effeminacy.

Further evidence of the power of these derogatory images is provided by some extracts from the short story *The Cousins*, published by *St. Enda's* in 1923, in which national/racial stereotypes abound. In *The Cousins*, the two eponymous cousins – one Irish and the other English – are seen discussing Ireland's lot after the conclusion of the Great War and the Irishman is described (unfairly) by his English relative as "hot-headed, aggressive" and "always fighting" – an exemplum of the animalistic nature of the Irish. However, the short story does not represent passive acceptance of the disparaging stereotypes, because the attempt to react to them is apparent in the clichéd, irreverent depiction of the British. Here, the British cousin is pictured as being a pleasure-seeker prone to betting, not unlike his compatriots (*SE* Feb. 1923, 3-4).

In the same line, Monks's cartoon shows not only to what extent the racist and racial stereotypes had been assimilated by the Irish cartoonist, but also denotes his reaction to them in that Monks hurls the thrust of biases and prejudices against Ireland's oppressor itself through his portrayal of the *shoneen*. The cartoon reverses the stereotypical images about the Irish in a straightforward manner: wiping the slate clean, Monks attributed female and infantile characteristics to those adopting manners imported from Britain, namely the *shoneens*.

The cartoon exemplifies a kind of 'negative response', which consisted in the action of hurling back to the British, or to those Irish mimicking the British, the stereotypes attributed to the people of Ireland. This was a common pattern in the story papers examined here. An example of this kind of reaction can be found in Mrs Margaret T. Pender's serialised story *The Child-Stealers: A Tale of the Days of Cromwell*, published in *Our Boys* from October 1917 until February 1920 (Keogh 2015, 703). 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*. The latter 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, at the time of the English republic of Oliver Cromwell (cf. O'Callaghan 2001).

Apart from the didactic and polemical intention to familiarise the young readers of *Our Boys* with yet another atrocity committed by the British usurpers, the serialised story is noteworthy for its depiction of the Britons as opposed to that of the Irish. The British child-stealers are two men in charge of taking Irish children between the ages of 10 and

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14 from their parents to sell them as slaves in the West Indies. They are described as "one lean and crabbed and crooked, the other stout and fat, but surly and ill-looking", whereas 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" (*OB* Oct. 1917, 38-40). The juxtaposition of the two descriptions is meant to show that the defective body was British rather than Irish.

Likewise, in the story *A Bit of the Road* set in 1801, the English incarnate negative examples of masculinity. One of them, "the English coward", is said to have been "beer-bloated and coarse" and to possess questionable habits, as he "ragged a good deal and he swore a good deal" (*YI* 11 Aug. 1917, 1). *A Bit of the Road* appeared in *Young Ireland*, which featured another piece of writing worthy of analysis in the same issue. This is titled *Our Civilisers* and it offers a fascinating case of 'alternative history', for it presents a fictitious parallel universe in which England is engaged in two conflicts: a global-scale war not very dissimilar from the actual, ongoing First World War and civil strife. This imagined English nation is described so as to resemble the Ireland of imperialist political and cultural discourses in that the "animalistic stereotype" (Valente 2011, 14) materialises here in the depiction of the Englishmen, who made themselves patently unfit for self-rule:

> These two incidents make it clear that England is absolutely unfitted for self-government. The English people cannot agree among themselves nor behave in an orderly and peaceful manner. Their legislators roll in the mud fighting one another and the commonalty wrecks a place of worship to prevent Free Speech. It is obvious that what England needs is benevolent but firm rule by some outside nation of higher civilisation, so that the civil war can be put down with a determined and impartial hand. (*YI* 11 Aug. 1917, 1)

In light of these considerations, the other European powers will impose French rule on England, which is now clearly "unfitted for self-government", and this action will be taken "for England's sake" – the sake of a country now inhabited by "the drunken Englishman so common in the slums who made a popular character on the French stage" (*YI* 11 Aug. 1917, 1). With this last statement the author was vindicating Irish dignity, because he made the English people his polemical target through an allusion to the undignified representation of the Irishmen as ineffectual paddies on the British stage. The excerpt polemically refers to those English discourses about the unequal dignity of the races which had often been used to oppugn Home Rule Bills and the claims of the

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Irish nationalists (Valente 2011, 79). All in all, by depicting the English as incapable to rule over themselves and/or possessing defective bodies, the editors of *Young Ireland*, *Our Boys*, and *St. Enda's* were reversing the discourses employed by the British to justify their domination, which relied on discourses of Irish inferiority and inability to self-government.

In this regard, returning to Monks' cartoon, another consideration should be made. It has to do with the process of 'moulding' Irish youths, because the rebuttal of negative stereotypes was deemed inadequate if not accompanied by the presentation to the readers of those 'tools' that could help them to ameliorate their conditions. When the readers of *Young Ireland* looked at the illustration, they saw both the responsible for Irish physical degeneration and its antidote – Anglicisation and mimicry as opposed to the practice of Gaelic games. It is here embedded the suggestion that Gaelic athletes had to be perceived as manlier, less effeminised, and infantilised, than those boys who did not play the same games. To begin with, the cartoonist, presumably in a conscious way, referred to a kind of widespread 'negative propaganda' propagated by the promoters of traditional sports at the beginning of the twentieth century, who "often connected images of British men with those of women or neutered men" (McDevitt 2004, 21).

Secondly, the portrayal of the Irish players as manly, neither childish nor effeminate, points to a kind of 'positive rhetoric', which was not based on the denigration of the British. The nationalists had realised that the Gaelic games could function as a regulatory regime that would create normative modes of masculinity. This aspect was understood by the contributors to the periodicals for juveniles, so, against the accusations of barbarism, effeminacy, and immaturity, they put forward an ideal of boyhood that revolved around the figure of the Gaelic athlete – a sportsman who, besides boasting physical prowess, was also committed to Ireland's prosperity. An ideal, it is worth noting, which was conditioned and shaped by the stereotypical representations formulated by the British.

Since their inception, the periodicals examined here devoted themselves to forging the character of their youthful readers according to specific sanctioned lines. They strategized to ensure that the informal character training of boys was carried out by publishing articles and stories about young men whose characterisations reveal the authors' efforts to counter noxious British influences and stereotypes. Lessons were imparted within the fictional element and made manifest by their location next to nonfictional moral mentorship, insofar as the non-fiction and advice columns of the periodicals lent weight and precision to the morals hidden in fictional accounts and illustrations (Olsen 2014, chap. 3). One of the aims

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of the non-fictional elements was to make certain that the young readers understood what lessons to draw from their readings.

Forging was not reducible to a specific story but was formed through the general appreciation of the whole complex of narratives by the reader (Olsen 2014, chap. 3). Analogously, by juxtaposing the various narrative forms and considering them as a whole, today's readers too can understand the lessons conveyed in the periodicals and come to the conclusion that these publications endeavoured to entertain their readership, but above all, to shape boys in a period of rapid change.

In particular, the periodicals lingered on a vision of disciplined 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 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" (2014, 232).

Importantly, all 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 magazines, the nationalists' support for the Gaelic games, which never abated throughout the twentieth century, was closely related to the physical and mental virtues the games were believed to teach to athletes. The lessons imparted on the playfields were thought to promote physical strength, individual control, religious consciousness, and military preparedness. In one word, according to the nationalists, the traditional pastimes fostered 'manliness' (Flanagan 2006, 110). And, since the term 'manliness', at this time, referred 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 early-twentieth-century Ireland.

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" (1996, 46). This statement may be easily paraphrased to describe the Irish context: there, Gaelic games were commended as valuable training in manliness. As a general rule, all kinds of sporting practice were valued and appreciated for their educational qualities, but no foreign sport was deemed as effective as the traditional ones.

Particularly illustrative is this message, which was sent to *Our Boys* by the Bishop of Cashel Dr Harty: "Hurling was one of the most manly,

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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 essential today" (*OB* Jun. 1918, 247). The notion of the Gaelic games as manly and nurturing a manly spirit had already been conveyed in a message sent by the Reverend J.B. Dollard the previous year. 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 develops those] qualities that he will find useful in the struggle for existence at all times. (*OB* Dec. 1917, 73)

From these extracts, it is clear how the term 'manliness' possessed a cultural resonance which is difficult to ignore in publications for boys. Nor should the close interrelationship between Gaelic games and the nationalists' manly ideal be neglected, as this informed the attitudes of *Our Boys* and its homologues towards the practice of the national games. The contributors to the periodicals were convinced that the traditional outdoor activities could facilitate the regeneration of a people exposed to decline in manhood, so they sponsored the activities of the GAA, the league trusted with the restoration of hurling and Gaelic football.

According to Coldrey, the Christian Brothers were "mainly responsible for the Gaelic cultural revival of the early twentieth century through the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884) and the Gaelic League (1893)" (1988, 2; cf. McElligott 2019, 352). Since its inception, their monthly *Our Boys* promoted the activities of the GAA among an impressionable generation of Irish youths. The message quoted below, which refers to the inauguration of the sport page simply entitled *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. (*OB* Sept. 1914, 22)

The phrase "if found desirable" deserves attention because it contains a clue to the editors' real objectives. Although they expressed the

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intention to provide news about sports from across the globe, and not only from Ireland, a survey of the magazine itself demonstrates that no concession was ever made to imported sports. No article on the "foreign" sports mentioned in the excerpt, such as 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 used the word 'Sport' what they actually meant is the Gaelic and nationalist versions of organised games (2006, 234). Nor did the paper change its policy shortly after its inception so as to provide a wide-ranging coverage of sports; on the contrary, all that the Christian Brothers changed was the title of the column – 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" (*OB* Oct. 1917, 30).

Both *Sport* and *Games of the Gael* were intended to assist the development of the GAA, to the history of which *Our Boys* dedicated a long succession of articles. A primary goal 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 their country (*OB* Nov. 1917, 57; cf. McElligott 2019, 352).

This 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. (*OB* Nov. 1914, 3) [4]

[4] 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

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With the objective to assist "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 dedicated column gave advice about how to start a club (*OB* Oct. 1917, 30). Editors and contributors expressed the hope 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. (*OB* Sept. 1914, 25)

Our Boys offered a crucial platform for supporting the spread of native games, proving to be 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. (*OB* Dec. 1918, 81)

The 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". At the turn of the twentieth century, the nationalist discourse of Irish masculinity was characterised by the interplay between bodily "vigour"

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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" (*OB* Dec. 1918, 81).

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and spiritual purity: the term "Gael" possessed distinctive masculine and racial overtones, as it referred to men whose perfectly formed bodies harmonised with the myth of a racially pure Irish nation. In turn, racial and physical purity were believed to stem from, and to be preserved by, the practice of native athletics (Nohrnberg 2010, 100-101).

The Christian Brothers contributed considerably to the development of the Gaelic Athletic Association from the pages of *Our Boys*, as they organised the games in both primary and secondary schools, thus addressing a crucial target audience. They then furthered this policy by publishing articles on the development of hurling and football, match reports, and fictional material such as *Stealing the Makings and the Sequel*, a story about a group of boys who stole pieces of wood to make hurling bats for the Galway county final (Flanagan 2006, 396).

Not unlike *Our Boys*, all the periodicals placed great emphasis on the introduction of the Gaelic Games into the school curriculum (cf. *SE* Apr. 1919, 223). Hurling and Gaelic football were deemed crucial in forging the body and character of young people, and in orienting them towards the Republican cause, to the point that the nationalists raised the issue whether British sports should be played in Irish schools. In January 1912, Neasa launched, from 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" (*IF* Feb. 1913, 3). His words resonate with the nationalist rhetoric meant to highlight the cultural individuality of the Irish nation, dichotomising Ireland from England (Ireland's "national life and tradition"), and the Irish from the English ("the temperament and physique of our people"). Similar opinions were voiced by Patrick Pearse in his writings and by Máire Nic Chearbhaill in *Young Ireland*, which additionally published the fixture *Sports of the Gael* dedicated to the practice of hurling in the school context. If Nic Chearbhaill believed that programs in sports should have been made more Gaelic (*YI* 28 Jul. 1917, 3), Pearse, as early as 1905, had advocated the prohibition of foreign sports competing with Irish games in schools (*ACS* 9 Dec. 1905; *supra*, chap. 1).

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5.3. An ideal boy: the athletic hero

Conceived as instrumental to the forging of Irish manly boys, Gaelic games became associated with an idealised form of masculinity, which was often structured around mythical exempla of athletes, because the world of the Gaelic Sagas, particularly the adventures of the boy-hero Cuchulainn and the Boy Corps of the Red Branch, provided the nationalists with a symbolic antidote to English stereotypes.

A seminal narrative reinvigorated in the final years of the nineteenth century was that of Cuchulainn, the legendary hero presented as an outstanding hurling player, whose first weapons were little more than a *camán* and a *sliotar*. He and his companions were "young men [who] wrestled on the green, or threw a javelin, or played at hurley" (*YI* 17 Nov. 1917, 2).

Retrieved from oblivion by Standish O'Grady's *History of Ireland: Cuculain and His Contemporaries* (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 the following. Even Yeats and Lady Gregory were partial to his enthusiasm for ancient Ireland.

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, Sétanta – 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" (*OB* Sept. 1914, 22). These will later save the boy's life. As he arrives at Culain's house, Sétanta is nearly killed by his massive guard dog but manages to survive thanks to his ability with the *camán*, as he hurls the silver ball into the dog's throat killing it. Later on, Sétanta is said to feel

> 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. (*OB* Sept. 1914, 22-23)

In this cycle of tales, Cuchulainn and the Red Branch are usually caught in the act of playing hurling, throwing the javelin, or running. The reader first comes across the Red Branch Knights in a scene in which the heroes are seen playing hurling: "the healthy faces of the boys all aglow with the exhilarating exercise; their long hair floating in the breeze,

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bound round the temples with bright coloured bands of silk on which were strung cup shaped ornaments of gold [...]" (*OB* Sept. 1914, 22-23).

The stories based on the saga of Cuchulainn lingered on the image of the vigorous male body shaped by sporting practice, which was displayed at the visual level by the illustration accompanying every instalment of the serial (see *Fig. 4*). Here, the boy-hero stands out thanks to his imposing figure, for the drawing was meant to grasp the attention of the young readership and, hopefully, to prompt an emulating effect. Hurling and the practice of native pastimes were put forward as 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.

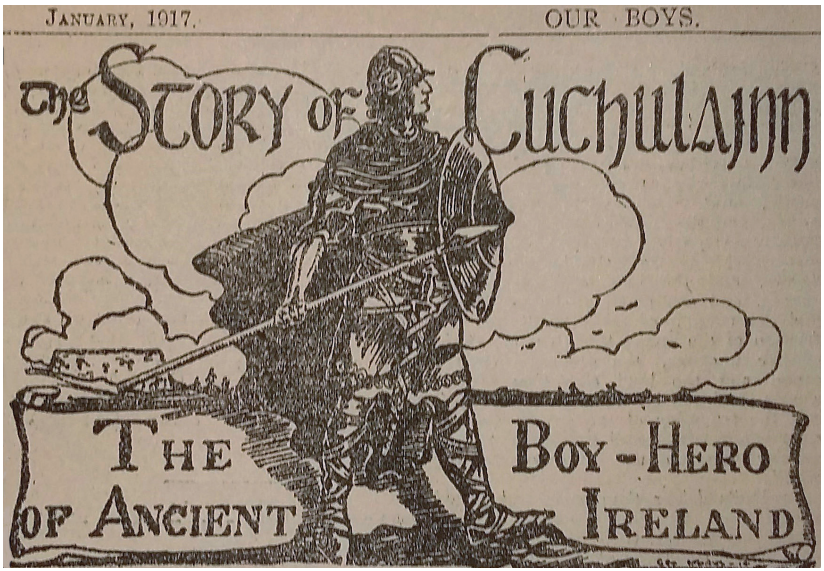

Figure 4. – The illustration depicting Cuchulainn in a long-running serial on the boy-hero (*OB* Jan. 1917, 147). Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (K504).

In the stories featured in the juvenile papers, the legendary heroes are not the only ones who boast outstanding athletic skills. Shortly after its establishment, in January 1915, the monthly *Our Boys* featured a story titled *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 relies heavily on the familiar

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heroic iconography of the Gaelic sagas (Flanagan 2006, 215). 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. (*OB* Jan. 1915, 142)

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"), appears to have been purposely made to counteract the stereotypical characterizations of the Irish as simian, effeminate, or childlike inferiors. Paud 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 (Flanagan 2006, 215).

The message promoting sporting practice was sometimes couched within non-fictional pieces that reported real sporting feats taking place in twentieth-century Ireland, being an example of this the article from *Our Boys* that details 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. (*OB* 18 Aug. 1927, 868)

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" (*OB* 18 Aug. 1927, 868). The factual reference to William Real offered a more relatable example to the boy readers of the monthly, who, being bombarded with images of sporting feats and descriptions of athletes in laudatory terms, were also made to associate positive connotations to sporting practice.

A survey of the periodicals enables one to demonstrate that the widespread support and participation in Gaelic games can be interpreted as the attempt to set forth a different image of the Irish boy of which the nationalist community could be proud – a boy like the fictional Paud

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or William Real. Updated and revised, hurling and Gaelic football constructed a representation of Irish masculinity that undermined the myth of the effeminate, child-like Celt possessing a defective body, which was so pervasive in the nineteenth century.

Physical prowess and vigour enhanced by sporting practice were duly celebrated by the Irish periodicals, even though 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. The emphasis on individual improvement, self-discipline, and commitment to the cause confirms that these aspects were likewise 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. In order to understand that, it is here worth reminding what Joseph Valente described as the internal contradiction of the Irish set by the British. According to the American scholar, the Irish found themselves in a condition of "double bind", as

> 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. (Valente 2011, 25)

Fuelled by the historic and asymmetric relationship of Ireland with England, this internal contradiction inflected the imagining and reimagining of the ideal of male youth. It even affected the representation of Cuchulainn in the tales by O'Grady and his epigones.

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 battle, and violent passions that led to unprovoked attacks. All these traits were held as reasons for the Irish inability to self-government, with Irish emotionalism being regarded as the main counter-indication (Curtis 1968, 54). O'Grady was not oblivious to such stereotypes: in his narrative, he therefore omitted all those episodes in the Cuchulainn's sagas that could be read "as confirmation and glorification of these negative images" and used to strengthen British rule (Valente 2011, 25). O'Grady's purged his texts of the episodes of unjustified violence or battle-frenzy in which Cuchulainn is incapable of controlling his own instincts, otherwise these passages would have confirmed the so-called "blind hysterics of the Celt", namely the "colonial discourse about the

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wildness and lack of civilization of Ireland, a discourse that was used to justify English imperialism" (Tymoczko 1999, 23-24; cf. also Curtis 1968, 54-61). As a consequence, also *Our Boys* ended up applying some selective censorship to the serial *The Story of Cuchulainn: The Boy-Hero of Ancient Ireland*: the Cuchulainn portrayed by the Christian Brothers appears an exemplum of chivalric, stainless behaviour and self-control, who rejects violence *per se* and is never caught in morally debasing situations.

Still, the impact of British stereotypes on the Irish imagination was more palpable in the selection of virtuous qualities attributed to exemplary characters which did not pertain to the literary world of ancient sagas. Avoiding the appearance of being stiffly didactic was essential if a magazine wanted to compete in the juvenile publishing industry of twentieth-century Ireland, when young people started reading for pleasure. At the same time, it was important for the youths to read stories to which they could easily relate, so the nationalists strove to present an archetype 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. Illustrative of this conviction is a comment placed at the end of an episode of *Barton's Island*, a serial reminiscent of *The Riddle of the Sands* about three boys enjoying their summer holidays on the island of the title. Directly addressing his readers, 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 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. (*OB* Christmas Number 1915, 116)

These stories offered no place for fabulous heroes who, showing off an outstanding intellect or physical prowess, never faltered in their goals.

The choice of more relatable 'ordinary' heroes attests to the fact that the attributes of a 'real' manly man were believed to be accessible to boys of any class. The Boy Scouts of Na Fianna Éireann, for instance, were living examples of the nationalists' ideal boy. In a portrayal offered by *Our Boys*, the republican Scouts were represented as a compound, in body and flesh, of coveted 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

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with short poles in our hands, we climbed hills, bathed, and engaged in various other athletic activities". Their patriotism was stimulated 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" for the mythological heroes were models of morality and civility (*OB* Oct. 1919, 35).

Equally emblematic is Wilf Diamond's serial *Diddy Stories*, which purported to be a realistic account of the life of an athlete beginning in this way: "*Diddy Stories*. A series of short stories relating true incidents from the life of a champion athlete". In contradiction to one's expectations, the serial was not a mere succession of tales recounting the athletic feats of this "champion athlete". On the contrary, great emphasis was 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". Appreciation for Diddy's lack of vanity was stated in categorical terms through recurrent references to his humbleness, including the comment that "being rather of a modest and retiring disposition he kept the knowledge of his aquatic abilities to himself" (*OB* Jul. 1922, 368).

The belief that physical prowess was not deemed a virtue if not accompanied by moral qualities is similarly evidenced in Patrick Pearse's school-story *The Wandering Hawk*, which was featured in instalments in *Fianna* over the course of two years, 1915 and 1916. As demonstrated in chapter two, it would be too simplistic to dismiss *Fianna* as a cluster of propagandistic pieces, because the monthly was certainly of its age and designed to compete in a modern publishing industry with a modern readership in mind. Its editors were not afraid to publish stories the genre of which pertained to British tradition: periodicals imported from London had made Irish children familiar with the narratives of high principles set in English public schools, and some Irish authors thought this popular genre could and should be Gaelicised (O'Leary 2004, 194). In the revolutionary and independence years, a few Gaelic authors tried their hand at writing school-stories (cf. O'Neill 2009), following the example of Pearse himself, who had taken the lead with his *The Wandering Hawk*.

This serial featured in *Fianna* well exemplifies the process through which the nationalists took an essentially British kind of story and, far from producing a eulogy to the institution that forged "the Aristo-Military Elite" of the Empire (Green 1980, 336; cf. Flanagan 2006, 12), reoriented the thrust of the narrative towards the Fenian, and by extension separatist, cause. *The Wandering Hawk* is a notable piece of writing,

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because it was authored by the leader of the Easter Rising himself, who relied on his experience as schoolmaster and principal to pen it. It also typifies the process through which nationalist ideas were refashioned into an entertaining reading for youthful audiences. By providing a recognizable context such as the school environment, Pearse contributed to making advanced nationalist ideas more understandable and relevant to his young readers. The familial background and relatable characters conveyed the notion that anyone could mould themselves on desirable lines.

The Wandering Hawk is set at the fictitious St. Fintan's School around the time of the Fenian rebellion of 1867, where one of the leaders of the unsuccessful revolt, the eponymous "Wandering Hawk", goes undercover disguised as a new teacher. The story opens on the school pupils, who are determined to give the new master a bad time. All sorts of ideas as to how annoy him are discussed, but when the Headmaster introduces Kilgallon, something in the new teacher's personality intrigues the boys, who forget to rebel. Having nicknamed him "The Little Captain", they are soon listening enraptured to the stories of Wolfe Tone and other Irish heroes which arise out of Kilgallon's History classes. Gradually, the talk comes down to the contemporary age, the 1860s, and the boys end up taking a breathless interest in "The Wandering Hawk". This was the name given to John Dunleary, alias Warren, a young National Schoolmaster who had proved himself a great Fenian organiser to the point that the government had put a bounty of 500 pounds on his head. The students will later find out that Dunleary is their "Little Captain".

The description of the fictitious St. Fintan's 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 and models of ideal boyhood: the school is surrounded by hurling and football fields; the athletic boys participate into tournaments among colleges and they are often "sauntering round the football field" (*F* May 1915, 6); physical prowess, to be cultivated through the practice of native games, is pictured as 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

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> 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. (*F* Feb. 1915, 7)

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 the playing of native games was a crucial aspect in a young man's physical and moral growth (*F* Feb. 1915, 4-5).

By looking up at inspirational characters such as Clery and Mr Slattery, the young readers learned to appreciate the inherent value of sporting practice as instrumental to develop a fit body. Nevertheless, the narrator does not fail to emphasise Clery's moral virtues as well, such as his "valiant heart", "the sunniest temper", and great self-control, while remarkable physical strength and courage are stated to match the character's ability to inspire loyalty. Clery's outward appearance, which makes him look like a "little saint" with "a sort of aureole" around his head, is meticulously described so as to mirror the intangible purity of his mind (*F* Feb. 1915, 7). What the narrator really admires of the fictional boy is his ability to never lose his temper, even in the most 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 (*F* Jun. 1915, 5).

Putting forward a new ideal that would combat British stereotypes meant to carefully select its desirable and desired characteristics. As passingly mentioned on various occasions, self-control was among the most coveted. The analysis of the story *A Plucky American Boy* by Ethelred Breeze Barry (*OB* Dec. 1917, 98-100) may be taken as a productive starting point to better understand the importance that Irish nationalists credited to self-control. *A Plucky American Boy* tells the story of Neil Wentworth, a boy forged at a school where the pupils play Gaelic football: he is "a thick-set, broad-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, trusted 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 designated

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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 a piece of advice given to him by an old player 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 falling back 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" (*OB* Dec. 1917, 99).

In these stories, the emphasis on the qualities 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 demeaned by the British. Conveniently, the Gaelic games were thought to 'mould' the boys of Ireland in multiple ways, as both their bodies and minds were forged according to sanctioned lines: in the nationalists' view, sporting practice could teach their young folk a sense of restraint and discipline. An insight into this perception of sport is given by an article from *Our Boys* detailing the benefits of sportsmanship, which was "so necessary for success in such games" and able to "suppress" selfishness, which was, instead, "so fatal to good play". On top of that, "implicit obedience to the captain and the unquestioning acceptance of the referee's ruling, produce self-restraint" (*OB* Nov. 1914, 75).

Hence, 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,

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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 thought and effective in action" (qtd. in McDevitt 2004, 22). 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 (Nugent 2008, 602).

This depiction was refracted in the juvenile papers an exorbitant amount of times. The athletes were emblems of moral and physical health who 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 their unbridled instincts and degrading femininity.

In the wealth of tales devoted to athletic feats, the column *Irish Athletes of Renown*, begun after the War of Independence 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. (*OB* 18 Aug. 1927, 861)

The passage is thick with racist rhetoric highlighting the quintessential athletic prowess of the Gaelic race ("proud possession of our race"), a recurring discursive response to the xenophobia of Victorian and Edwardian England, which caricatured the Irish as being physically and mentally inferior to their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. The passage is also illustrative of the educational intent of the articles published in these periodicals for juveniles: the athletes presented in the series had to

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be imitated ("let young Irish men [...] emulate those whose deeds have been recorded here") by the youthful readers, because these sportsmen possessed the "attributes which can still benefit and adorn our manhood". In an analogous way, the whole series is illuminating about the qualities that had to be nurtured in the young Irish boys. The following description of jumper and sprinter Peter O'Connor bears witness to this statement. The successful 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. (*OB* May 1915, 251)

Sportsmanship, honourable behaviour, and physical prowess were commonly praised in athletes. In the specific instance, the contributor ascribed to Peter O'Connor also some saintly qualities, as he consistently highlighted the sportsman's abstinence and habit of private praying. As was the case with Clery's description, the message embedded here was that the ascetic regimen and salutary discipline of champion athletes were commendable also in the case of boys, because they helped the young stay pure. On numerous occasions, *Our Boys* put forward a masculine ideal endowed with qualities that were traditionally reserved for priesthood. Self-discipline bordered on saintly asceticism, ecclesiastical self-restraint, and abstinence. Especially in the pages of *Our Boys*, the readers were constantly pointed to a continuous process of renunciation as a defining characteristic of the athlete's sporting career (cf. Nugent 2008). The youths were repeatedly provided with biographical facts related to real athletes, which lent weightiness to the messages about resisting the pangs of temptation, because capitulation to them was regarded as symptomatic of emasculation (cf. *OB* Sept. 1916, 6). Athletes were lionised as paragons of determination and self-discipline, being an example of this the Finnish champion Ville Ritola (1896-1982), whose "rigid abstention from alcohol and tobacco" contributed to his success (*OB* May 1925, 46; cf. Keogh 2015, 711).

Sinn Féin and *Our Boys* published various versions of the following message by the Celt, in which the revival of native games was pictured as inextricably connected to the preservation of moral cleanliness: "we want our young manhood keen and adept in native pastimes. We also want

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those pastimes to glow with the ideals of 'Courage and Truth and Stainless Youth'" (*OB* 1 Sept. 1927, 889; *SF* 13 Jun. 1908, 3-4, qtd. in Valente 2011, 71). *Our Boys* set before its readers an ideal of purity of life combined to noble, chivalrous behaviour that was reiterated in an editorial article by Brother De Sales, who gave prominence to the notion of "purity" in the point where he stated that "fidelity to the practices of religion, especially Confession and Communion, reading good books, good companions, total abstinence, pure air, diligence at work, manly sport, physical exercise, and hobbies, are all aids to a clean life" (*OB* Nov. 1915, 66).

The dedicated periodicals recommended abstinence from alcohol and tobacco to youths of all classes. Although moderate smoking was accepted for adults, there was general agreement that it was harmful to youths, because the addiction to tobacco stunted growth and weakened the growing body with devastating consequences in adulthood (cf. Olsen 2014). Again, the fear of a decline of the Irish race fuelled by English stereotypes infiltrates the pages of *Our Boys* and its homologues: behind the appeals to abstinence, corroborated by the nationalists' mainstream opposition to youthful drinking and smoking, we can glimpse the spectre of degeneration that greatly worried those fighting for Ireland's independence.

This further proves that the periodicals for juveniles in my corpus offered a rather monolithic ideal of boyhood, which was 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 be preserved or acquired and then nourished. As previously seen, the periodicals portrayed hurling and Gaelic football as particularly formative in this regard. Yet their practice was glorified not only for its positive impact on counteracting pervasive stereotypes about the Irish physique and character.

Ireland's boys were invited to join the GAA clubs, because the playing of traditional games was thought to possess a disciplinary aspect that not only moulded a manly body, but taught the young to cultivate their aggressiveness in a way that would become beneficial, one day, to the advancement of the nationalist cause (Valente 2011, 67). The Gaelic games could impart the young generations with the necessary virtues and patriotism that would drive the 'New Boy' to free his country from the British yoke, and build an Irish nation-state founded on nationalist 'clean' values. Proper forging would enable the Irish boy to give his contribution to the cause. The nationalists were convinced that whereas "a shoneen generation would ruin forever the fame and hopes of the Island of the Saints", "an Irish-Ireland generation", moulded in the love for its

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country and proud of Irish difference, would "restore the greatness of the Ireland of Patrick and Colum and Brian" – that is to say, they would construct a nation reminiscent of prelapsarian Gaelic Ireland (*YI* 28 Apr. 1917, 9).

Hence, the final step for the new Irish boy, boldly masculine and committed to Ireland's cause, was to move from his athletic life and the playgrounds to the battlefields where the actual war against Britain was being fought – after all, even the mythological Red Branch Knights trained themselves on the playgrounds of hurling with the objective to be able to "repel their foreign invaders" (*YI* 17 Nov. 1917, 2). After the Easter Rising, the separatist nationalists thrusted aside the moderate constitutionalists, and physical force was increasingly contemplated as the key to attaining independence (cf. *supra*, chap. 3). Gaelic Ireland could be restored not only through the battles against Anglicisation, but by taking up arms and proving Gaelic courage and manly virtues once again (Quinn 2015, chap. 8). From this perspective, from receptacles of teachings imparted through informal and formal education, the new Irish boys became active agents. As such they were constructed and represented by the periodicals for juveniles.

The next section further investigates the ideas regarding ideal boyhood in early-twentieth-century Ireland, taking into consideration the boy's crucial role in the context of nation-building. The investigation first shows to what extent the development of a distinct Gaelic and athletic form of masculinity, which rejected the stereotypical perceptions of the Irish by the English, was interconnected to the increasing Irish militarism of the turn of the century. Second, it proves that the athletic Irish boy was expected to take an active role in the regeneration of his country.

5.4. The soldier hero fighting for Ireland

In Victorian and Edwardian Britain, sport was widely thought to ensure the success of the Imperial enterprise and the victory over its enemies. Sporting practice, especially the participation in team games, was represented as prodromal to the fight on battlefields: physical prowess, the values of loyalty, *esprit de corps*, the discipline learned and developed on the fields of cricket, rugby or football, were to come in handy when confronting Britain's rivals. Many saw sports as instrumental to the forging of both character and body insofar as it kept people's minds and

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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* (Fussell 1975) 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 traits acquired while playing at cricket or any other game at school.

Positive images of war and army were prevalent in British society before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. The literate pre-war male generation had grown up reading the adventure stories by George A. Henty and Henry Rider Haggard, the *Boy's Own* magazine, and many best-selling accounts of the South African War that 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 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": not only were the playing fields of Eton coterminous with the imperial battlefields, but it was commonly believed that team games instilled into boys the essential qualities of a military leader (Pennell 2014, 13).

At the levels of discourse and imagery, sport was tightly interconnected to warfare, with the former often narrated in the language of battle, and this phenomenon was not the exclusive prerogative of British culture and mentality. Sport was globally regarded as instrumental to the physical development of soldiers and Wellington's apocryphal remark achieved currency also in nationalist Ireland (Valente 2011, 163). The famous dictum was alluded to by both *Fianna* and *Our Boys*, with the latter reporting in its pages 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!'" (*OB* Jul. 1917, 296; cf. *F* May 1915, 3). Irish nationalists professed to believe that the Duke's words rang true in every country, because even "Ireland" "will always need athletes" ready to fight (*SE* 1919, 223).

The pages of *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's* abounded with metaphors drawn from the semantic field of warfare, employed in connection to the lexicon of sport. In the tale *Paddy's Conquest* from *Our Boys*, for example, the school playfield hardens the young protagonist – bruised and injured – to a soldier's life and, at the

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same time, allows for conferral of prestige and admiration on those who remain loyal to the group in situations of fight. Both honours and sacrifice characterised the life of the 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" (*OB* Dec. 1914, 118-119).

The poem by Crawford Neal, which preambled the story *Stealing a 'Makings'* by R. Kenny, was likewise firmly set in the idea of sport as prodromal to warfare, a connection corroborated by the echoes from the epic poem genre contained in this 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'. (*OB* Jun. 1918, 244-245)

What is important is that, as time passed, the rhetorical links between sport and warfare acquired a more tangible form. As the contributor to *St. Enda's* declared, "Ireland will always need athletes", a concept reiterated by *Our Boys* in this 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.

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> In the workshop, on the farm,
> At the desk – where'er you be –
> From your future efforts, boys,
> Comes a nation's destiny. (*OB* May 1918, 215)

In the excerpt, *Our Boys* expressed its need for 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 sometimes acquired more 'radical' overtones, especially when employed by the contributors to *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's*.

To the mind of more radical nationalists, Ireland needed athletes because there was a war to be won – that for national independence. An article published in *Irish Freedom* stated clearly that any Irishman had the duty to be physically fit 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. (*IF* Mar. 1911, 7)

The periodicals reiterated and propagated this concept through stories, poems, and advertisements. Even *Our Boys* sometimes envisioned and publicised this understanding of the purposes of juvenile athletics – even before adjusting its editorial line to the changed sentiments in public opinion in the early 1920s. Exemplary in this regard is the story *Shemus O'Brien*, written by the mysterious "X" and eerily reminiscent of the tale *Paud O'Donoghue* (*OB* Jan. 1915, 124). 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" (*OB* Jun. 1915, 258). The omniscient narrator significantly frames the account of these achievements on the playfield within an encomium of Shemus's patriotic commitment to Ireland. In the story, athletic feats *per se* are not worthy of praise: the author narratively stresses the fact that the protagonist puts his talent at the service

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of the nation and has become a leader of the United Irishmen [5] despite his young age.

As befitting his status as boy-hero of the 1798 Rising, Shemus could boast all the necessary qualities – physical, moral, intellectual – that such a leading role required: the impressive athletic skills are counterbalanced by his 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 the iconography of martyrdom, as *Shemus O'Brien* culminates in the persecution of the young protagonist. The climax of the story takes place in a courtroom, with Shemus undergoing trial and uttering his defiant speech from the Dock, the quintessence 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" (*OB* Jun. 1915, 258-259).

With his speech, the young Irishman apparently seals his fate, as he is sentenced to death: in fact, in the fast-paced conclusion, he manages to flee from the scaffold on the day of his execution, relying on his physical prowess also this time. 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 and John O'Connor, who led the English to their death in a ravine (cf. Flanagan 2006, 215). 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 when creating the character of Shemus O'Brien was to present an ideal of Irish boyhood that revolved around the absolute identification of the individual with the Irish nation – a real entity in the minds of X and the monthly's editorial board –, and a kind of boy who puts his physical and moral qualities to the advancement of the cause.

In keeping with the objective of encouraging boys to look at sporting practice as military preparedness beneficial to Ireland, at the beginning of

[5] *Shemus O'Brien* is set at the time of the 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 in the discourses of the advanced nationalists for the centenary of commemoration of the Rebellion (2001, 91).

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War of Independence commenced in January 1919, *St. Enda's* featured a story with a similar plot pattern. Titled *His Model*, this story by Liam MacFirr unfolds 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 who was once "the champion hurler of Ireland" and has later become a priest. The name attributed to the latter character is significant and alludes to its political leanings, as 'Hugh O'Neill' inevitably reminded the reader of the historical homonymous hero – 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.

Jack is destined to meet 'his model' during a pivotal event in Irish history, the Easter Rising of 1916, as the Father is ministering to some wounded Volunteers during an attack of the British. 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 enemy 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" (*SE* Apr. 1919, 231-232). 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" (*SE* Apr. 1919, 232).

Besides short stories, ballads were the first choice when inviting boys to patriotically do their duty. With regard of the rationale of the present work, of great interest are the songs appealing to the athletes of Ireland for contributing to 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 who founded 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 so as to meet the taste of a young readership. Denoting an unshakable trust in Ireland's youth, Brian na Banban's addressees were the young men of Ireland who were summoned to "arise in Freedom's name", and the appeal was later reiterated to all

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Irish girls who will "have to toil for Ireland's sake" and "fight the Saxon mind" (1912, 86-100). The songs and recitations incited the young to fight for Ireland's self-determination – "The Cause of Roisin Dubh" well exemplifies this aspect – or invited them to rediscover the country's heritage and past in the literary homages paid to Robert Emmet and Hugh O'Donnell Roe ("The Death of Emmet" and "Hugh O'Donnell Roe") or in poetic praises of the Irish language ("Welcome, O Gaelic Tongue"). Nor did the collection fail to invoke the young "Athletes of Eireann", who would overthrow the British tyrant:

> 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,

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> 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! (O'Higgins 1912, 11-12)

The author delivered several messages in his poem pointing to the fact that Ireland needed total separation from England; that moral force was not enough to gain independence; and that all the Irish had to actively participate in the struggle for national self-determination. Using various stylistic devices to convey his message, O'Higgins drew the audience into a drama that envisioned 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 asserted the impossibility of a peaceful transition to independence through the constitutional path.

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. The societal interpretation of the hurling stick as a weapon training Irish boys for a future battle for independence is a peculiar connotation of the hurling equipment well exemplified by an advertisement (see *Fig. 5*) featured in the pages of both *Irish Freedom* and *Our Boys* (*IF* Jun. 1912, 4; *OB* Sept. 1918, 768). It advertises a shop of sports goods, the very same tools – particularly the *camán* – that will be used to achieve political freedom. The caption, a stanza of "Ireland's Hurling Men" written by Brian na Banban, hails the hurling player as "The Man of the Future".

Patrick Pearse would have not questioned the validity of this statement. The Riser 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! (*AM* Christmas 1909, 15)

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Figure 5. – 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 (*IF* Jun. 1912, 6). Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (ILB 05).

Pearse's remarks reveal the extent to which he believed in the mentorship provided by sporting practice during adolescence. This was a widespread belief in early-twentieth-century Ireland.

As it is likely to imagine, *Fianna* was at the forefront in promoting physical fitness, which was to be acquired by playing the Gaelic games with the objective of raising a combative generation of boys. 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". The code of membership recurrently emphasises the importance of being "fit", "strong", "trained in body" as

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well as in mind. The first goal that *Fianna*'s readers had to carry out was 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 intensive training, Scouts were renowned for their proficiency in the athletic department and their militaristic outlook, as this 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
> Of all who are striving for our Eire's weal! (O'Higgins 1912, 54; *IF* Nov. 1911)

The song is equally revealing of the habit of the Irish nationalists of incorporating Ireland's mythological and factual past into contemporary culture to foster a new sense of selfhood and citizenship (cf. Long 2018, 187-188). Recalling Ireland's past heroes to mind was a means of inducting a new generation of citizens into the fight for independence. The boys' citizenship was articulated in terms of their belonging to a genealogy of patriotic warriors and their duty of living up to the standards of those "who won for her glory in the days that are gone". The Scouts, the "young guard of Eireann" of the song, were presented as the spiritual heirs of the dead past heroes who fought for Ireland's freedom, as twentieth-century boys were asked to follow "the teaching of her hero dead" (O'Higgins 1912, 54).

The stories featured in *Fianna* and read by the Irish Boy Scouts analogously pointed to a genealogy of patriots that started with the mythological heroes of the ancient sagas and ended with the Scouts. As seen in Chapter Four, most nationalists took an explicit interest in

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constructing a kind of heroic nationalist genealogy that included the youngest generations, because the Irish youths were expected to follow in the wake of Fionn and Cuchulainn. With regard to the latter, Neasa interestingly 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" (*IF* Jun. 1913, 3). The nationalists looked to Ireland's patriotic and mythical past to find in it legends of heroes like Cuchulainn and the Fianna, which were, as Mircea Eliade would put it, "exemplary and consequently repeatable, and thus serve[d] as a model and justification for all human actions" (qtd. in Kearney 1978, 128).

Irish nationalists attributed great educational value to the 'exemplum', namely the incarnation of all desirable qualities, to which Ireland's youth had to be exposed in the contexts of formal and informal education. Indeed, at St. Enda's, pupils were spurred to become like the heroic Gaels sung of in old Irish epics, whose "fighting is always merry and his feasting always sad". From an article in *An Macaomh*, we discover that, there, schoolteachers endeavoured to recover what had been lost in the years under British occupation, as they tried to make their students nearer to the spirit of ancient heroes by keeping up before them "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" (*AM* May 1913, 6). The attribute "eternal" associated with the gesture of smiling points to the existence of essential qualities characterising true Irish boyhood: it reassures that Irish heroism has a timeless essence. Pearse was careful to remind his pupils that "smiling", the very gesture of Fionn, was made also by other, more relatable and recent, young warriors: it "was most memorably made by Emmet when he mounted the scaffold in Thomas Street" and "most recently by those Three who died at Manchester" (*AM* May 1913, 6). Pearse's lexical choices are indicative of his designated role for contemporary Irish boys in the future of their country, as it is here embedded the idea of the boy warrior ready to sacrifice himself for Ireland – a boy soldier happy to die for Ireland's salvation as his ancestors had done.

Pearse's tactic of mashing up myth and history, mythic ancient Ireland and chauvinistic accounts of post-1798 patriot movements, was embraced by *Fianna*, which likewise marshalled a pantheon of Irish heroes to inspire the youth of contemporary Ireland to patriotic sacrifice (Fanning 2016, 29). *Fianna* never failed to praise any patriot who "died a brave, young heart" in a selfless act of heroism to further the national

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cause, and was careful to specified that the patriot's "pure and unselfish love for his country stands as an example for all times" (*F* May 1915, 16).

The young members of Na Fianna Eireann were to conceive themselves as the spiritual and political legatees of several older dead generations of patriots, who died for their "pure and unselfish love" for the country like Emmet. Indeed, Emmet's "indomitable spirit" would "animate the men of Ireland, and never let [them] rest or know peace till the last fight is fought, and Ireland is free!" (*F* Sept. 1915, 10). The stories published in *Fianna* that inflamed the Scouts' imagination were either historical adventure tales, as seen in the second chapter, or the translations of Irish sagas made by Standish O'Grady there reported concisely. The extended genealogy proposed in *Fianna* was to link the Scouts not only with the Fenian forebears of the previous century, but also with former Irish patriots such as the abovementioned 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 (Kearney 1978, 125-139).

The nationalists grasped the strength of the hold that the stories about past heroes could have on the imagination of Irish youths. With the wisdom of hindsight, we know that they were not wrong in their assumptions. Ballads and fictionalised accounts about the lives and deeds of dead heroes were effective in convincing the youngsters that they were part of a long succession of patriots. When describing his role in the 1919 ambush at Soloheadbeg, the event that started the Anglo-Irish War, Dan Breen was eager to 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 (Beatty 2016, 21). 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. The IRA Captain Sean Prendergast, formerly a member of the republican boy scouts, considered the mythological Cuchulainn and the historical "Hugh O'Neill and Rory O'More and Owen Roe O'Neill; Tone and Emmet and Davis and Mitchel" his "forefathers": this is why he was so deeply convinced that Ireland "ought to be free" and ultimately took up arms to "fight Ireland's battle" (BMH.WS0755, 50).

Tales about past and mythological heroes provided models to emulate, but also contained hope of redemption. In particular, the mytho-

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logical sagas were interpreted as prophecies that drew attention to what Ireland might become if today's youths took on themselves to fight for their country in the wake of the heroes of Irish glorious past. 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. (*preface*)

Many sympathisers of Na Fianna Éireann were optimistic about the involvement of the Irish boys in the construction of the future nation. In a passage of the *Fianna Handbook* later evoked in *Fianna*, Sir Roger Casement portrayed the republican Boy Scouts as the natural inheritors of the mythological Fianna and voiced his trust in them. The members of the youth organisation were familiar with the concept of the original Fianna, its cultural significance, and what was expected from them to honour their ancestors. Imbued with the ancient heroic values, the Fianna of today would not disappoint who had prophesised their success:

> 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 gallant name and tradition of the ancient Fianna and the mighty purpose of the modern Fenians. (*FH* 1914, 151; cf. *F* Sept. 1915, 7-8)

Irish adult people were discouraged from belittling the youths' efforts, because these were the "Nation-Builders of To-Day" (*YI* 7 Jul. 1917, 3). *Irish Freedom* brought harsh criticism on those who thought that Na Fianna Éireann was "of little importance" because it was "made up of boys", and blamed "such people" who "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, the commentator reminded his readers that "one of the three Irishmen who shook the British Empire like an

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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" (*IF* Dec. 1910).

The idea of a genealogy of patriots culminating in the boys of Fianna is then reiterated in this passage, which invokes the idea of sacrifice:

> 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. (*IF* Dec. 1910)

As part of the image of nationalist youth promoted by the Na Fianna Éireann, members were expected to be prepared "to make the ultimate sacrifice to attain Irish independence" (Hay 2011, 447). The boys knew that the struggle for national independence could lead to their deaths, just as it had for the rebels of the past Emmet and Allen. But they were made to believe that their martyrdom in the attempt to follow their ethos would not be for nothing. *Fianna* and the founders of the Irish Boys Scout Movement entrusted the young generations with building a free country at all costs. They were convinced that the Boy Scouts would manage to restore the prelapsarian Ireland which existed before British Rule.

From O'Grady's *In the Gates of the North*, Sir Roger Casement extrapolated the passage below, which he reported in the *Fianna Handbook* by referring its content to the Boys Scouts. Somehow, he sensed that the twentieth century, through its sons, would bring great changes in Ireland (cf. Garvin 1986, 67).

> 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. (*FH* 1914, *preface*)

Thus, separatist nationalists were confident in the success of their efforts of moulding a young generation harbinger of independence. In 1914, Casement could hear them coming: he believed that the long-awaited advent of "the heroes" was about to happen.

But were the "heroes" really coming?

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Conclusion
Who Answered the Call?

The emergence of the four periodicals analysed here did not resolve the problem of suitable juvenile reading material for good. In the Free State, imports of British popular culture continued to be received with enthusiasm by large sections of the young population (O'Connor 2015, 71). Periodicals like "*The Union Jack* and *The Magnet*" were "not the type of literature Irish boys of that time should be reading", as IRA Brigade Engineer Michael F. Ryan stated in a 1921 interview, recalling how he used to carry English story papers with himself to deceive British police about his loyalty to Westminster in case of questioning (BMH.WS1709, 27). Yet, this reading material continued to circulate in the island also for non-strategic purposes as a cultural commodity.

Now, given that the cultural investment of the Irish nationalists in the production of juvenile periodicals was only partially successful, did they manage, at least, to convince some of their readers to fight for the cause? The obvious question to be asked is: did the boys and girls of Ireland answer the call?

The answer may be yes. I will not argue that all the readers of *Our Boys*, *Fianna*, *Young Ireland*, and *St. Enda's* answered the periodicals' clarion calls to fight in active combat. But a survey of the statements in the archives of the Bureau of Military History suggests that a significant number of Irish youths decided to take up actual arms in addition to continuing the battle on Anglicisation; their willingness to do so was often conditioned by their exposure to Irish nationalist periodicals and their affiliations to youth organisations. For sure, many young who would later become protagonists of the foundation of independent Ireland read nationalist papers in their adolescence. Thomas Hevey, Adjutant IRA in County Mayo, was a reader of *Our Boys*, "the only 'paper' [he] was allowed to select and purchase for [him]self" when he was a boy (BMH.

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WS1668, 5). Sean Prendergast, formerly member of Na Fianna Éireann and Captain of the IRA in the 1920s, emphasised in a 1921 interview: "the Irish movement of the past few years", "had had to rely on a few weekly, bi-monthly and monthly journals, papers and periodicals for national news". He declared that most of his "knowledge of Ireland's history had been obtained from the numerous magazines, periodicals, journals and tracts which [his] good father, then a few years dead, kept apparently as heirlooms" (BMH.WS0755, 140 and 2). "Magazines" and "periodicals" including the juvenile story papers.

The young were inspired by what they read in the periodicals and what they learned thanks to the activities of the nationalist organisations for juveniles that belonged to the same extended network of *Our Boys* and the other magazines. As seen in this volume, reading, teaching, and debating Irish history and politics were fundamental components of the periodicals for juveniles and the institutions or groups they were related to. The nationalists of the early twentieth century wanted to make Irish youth politically aware out of pride in the knowledge of Ireland's cultural and political difference: overall, they succeeded in their mission. The lofty ideals and past heroism celebrated by the four periodicals proved appealing to many Irish boys and girls, who attempted to resume the work begun and left unfinished by Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, and other patriots (cf. Quinn 2015, chap. 8). When interviewing IRA veterans from the Anglo-Irish War, Augusteijn and Hart found out that most of them had developed a nationalist political consciousness from their readings. The stories and articles about Ireland's past and mythology, and contemporary political events had acted as a catalyst for the rise of a new combative generation (Hart 1998, 207).

Those topics were learned at the various nationalist organisations or from the periodicals that meant to provide Irish youths with a nationalist formal and informal education. For instance, many among the leaders of the Easter Rising and, subsequently, of the IRA had been educated by the Christian Brothers in their formative years. Steven O'Connor has argued that *Our Boys* was successful in competing with the British weeklies "establishing a market for itself among the sons of Catholic nationalists" and he recalls that Cristopher S. Andrews, the veteran of the independence struggle, said that "the Christian Brothers were a central influence on many of those who later joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and other nationalist organisations" (2015, 73). Indeed, according to 'Todd' Andrews, it was "the groundwork of the Brothers" that delivered and shaped the Irish Free State (Andrews 1979, 74; cf. Keogh 2015, 700).

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Many of these boys did not oppose armed action. Of course, *Fianna* was the most vocal of the periodicals in stressing the importance of active combat in achieving complete independence since its inception. If such independence could only be obtained by embracing weapons in the manner of the patriots of the past, then this was something at which a true Fiann did not "flinch" (*FH* 1914, 8). Thus, it does not come as a surprise that a considerable part of the Irish Boy Scouts played an active role in building the Irish nation-state.

Fianna was prone to exaggerate the political importance of the Boy Scout movement, either consciously or otherwise, but its members did participate in the crucial events of Ireland's long path to freedom. The Boy Scouts figured prominently in filling essential roles in real life and in the public imagination. When Jeremiah O'Donovan 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 Na Fianna Éireann 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 (Lawlor 2008, 39-40).

In the wake of Rossa, the members of Na Fianna Éireann were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice to achieve Irish independence (May 2011, 447). 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. It would be a mistake to think that these boys were unaware of the future they were forcing into existence (Lawlor 2008, 40). In June 1914, 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 fight as many ex-members of the Na Fianna Éireann joined the Irish Volunteers or, if underage, by forwarding messages for the officers. They guarded bridges and buildings, patrolled coasts and water supplies, and generally tried to make themselves useful.

Even though measures were taken to keep younger boys out of action during the 1916 Rising by organising a camp for the Easter weekend, many Irish Boy Scouts joined the rising as fighters, despatch carriers, and scouts. Seven were killed in action (Hay 2011, 446). The narrative of their sacrifice would later inspire the exploits of a new crop of rebels. To date, two of Na Fianna Éireann's most famous recruits are Seán Heuston and Chief Scout Con Colbert, whose names figure

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among those of the men executed at Kilmainham Gaol for their part in 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. They had earned their title of Fiann, i.e. of 'warrior of Ireland', and became cult heroes also because of their youth: in post-1916 propaganda, they were eulogised as exemplary models of Irish boyhood for future generations. In a 1922 Easter Week commemoration souvenir – the *Easter Week Commemoration Aeridheact Souvenir Programme* – the two were remembered as brave young men who "in boyish simplicity and purity, and with manly courage faced the firing squad" appointed for their execution. They met their "deaths, happy that it was for Ireland, sure of the heaven that awaited them" (qtd. in Hay 2011, 488).

Other notable members celebrated by Na Fianna Éireann were Seán McLoughlin and Liam Mellows. The latter, the scout 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. Clearly, Na Fianna Éireann took pride in the involvement of former or current members in the rebellion and the other crucial fights of the revolutionary years.

We may suppose that the girl members of the few female branches of nationalist organisations did the same with their heroines. If Irish young men like Mellows played a predominant role in the 1910s-1920s, noticeable was also the presence, on crucial occasions, of some girls who had yearned to participate more actively, not only to carry out the caring, nurturing, and lady-like activities deemed suitable for their gender. One of the girls known for participating in the Rising was the fifteen-year-old Mary McLoughlin, who had been a member of Clan na Gael, a group founded in 1911 to offer girls the same kind of military training as boys received in Na Fianna Éireann. During the Rising, she was put at the service of Countess de Markievicz to despatch messages between the General Post Office (GPO) and the Irish Citizen Army in Stephen's Green, and in the College of Surgeons (McDiarmid 2015, 8 and 23). In her brief witness statement kept at the Bureau of Military History, she made no references to what she was used to reading, but her membership to Clan na Gael, "a military body for the training of members to serve Ireland" suggests that her political consciousness was aroused and forged in those nationalist circles with which the periodicals sympathised or were affiliated to (BMH.WS0934, 1). For sure, we know that young women like Mary, when in dire straits, went with their memory back to the stories of past Irish heroines to find inner strength.

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In Kilmainham Gaol, women thought about the daughters of Fenians or the women of '98, about whom they had read in books and periodicals such as *Bean na hÉireann* and *Young Ireland* (cf. McDiarmid 2015, 28).

In general, the documented active presence of the Boy Scouts and the Christian Brothers' students in the crucial events of the conquest of independence confirms what Augusteijn and Hart had termed "the generational gap" in the Irish Risorgimento. Irish independence was attained thanks to the crucial role played by the young in the long struggle for national self-determination (Hart 1998, 169-172). Declan Kiberd noted that, as a norm, "in societies on the brink of revolution, the relation between fathers and sons is reversed"; according to him, "the Irish Risorgimento" was no exception because it was "among other things, a revolt by angry sons against discredited fathers" (1996, 380). In the periodicals examined here, there is the element of the generational struggle, even though the targets were not discredited fathers in the literal sense: rather, the conscious appeals to the agency of boys and girls projected a generational struggle in which the young opposed the Old Order embodied by Ireland's subjugation to British rule.

In the nationalist discourses of the early phases of the revolution, Irish youth was increasingly praised as the force capable of regenerating the country. On their part, many youths purported to be the makers of national independence, as declared by Liam Mellows in his famous *Notes from Mountjoy Jail*, when he defined the Irish young as "the salvation of the country" (qtd. in Foster 2015, 35). As a full-time organiser for the republican Boy Scouts, Mellows championed the discourse of national "salvation" through a rising of the young, and in the aftermath of the War of Independence, he maintained that the boys of Na Fianna Éireann helped "save the soul of Ireland" (McManara 2019, 13, 46 and 103). Mellows's belief reached vast resonance in the late 1910s and early 1920s, when many came to regard the Irish youths as successful in their efforts to set in movement a train of actions that managed to transform Irish life, politics, and culture. There was a tendency to idealise young people's nationalist political action (Foster 2015, 30). They were seen as a vanguard of social and political change, the protagonists of the most dramatic upheavals in the country, and they represented a new kind of young Irish people.

In his "Youth Culture and the Cork I.R.A.", Peter Hart pinpointed two interesting statements made in the 1920s, which attest to the increasing trust people bestowed upon the new young person who was supposedly born out of the convulsions of post-Easter Rising Ireland. The first statement is an excerpt from Mrs William O'Brien's

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In Mallow (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". Mrs O'Brien does not conceal her admiration for the youth who emerged with the rise of cultural and political nationalism in Ireland: 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". In "The Irish Revolution", Erskine Childers likewise enumerated the virtues of the young 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" (Hart 1990, 17; cf. also Hart 1998, 165).

Needless to say, the qualities mentioned by O'Brien and Childers recall the positive attributes associated with the ideals of youth set forth and disseminated by the Irish periodicals for juveniles.

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Acknowledgements

This work began as a doctoral dissertation at the State University of Milan in 2016 and the process of converting my thesis into a book was carried out between my hometown and Dublin. In these years, I have accrued many debts. I benefited greatly from the support of Paolo Caponi and Cristina Paravano, who have given me precious instructions as mentors: I am especially grateful for the thoughtful advice they offered about potential flaws in my arguments. Caponi also made it possible for me to conduct research in Dublin and at the University College Cork in the years 2016-2018, where I collected the archival material at the core of the present book. Incidentally, I would like to thank the staff of the Special Collections at UCC, the National Library of Ireland, and the Dublin City Library & Archive. NLI has granted permission to reproduce images from its collections.

Grateful thanks are also due to Mary Hatfield and Nicoletta Brazzelli, who discussed specific aspects of this project and gave me much useful advice. Similarly, Sara Gazo read several drafts of *Birth of an Independent Ireland* and thankfully helped me identify some problems.

I have presented various versions of this research at conferences across Europe and am very appreciative of the comments I received. Some portions of this book stem from the papers delivered at conferences and from essays published in the *Alicante Journal of English Studies* and *RISE* (*Review of Irish Studies in Europe*).

I am pleased to acknowledge the financial assistance provided by my former Doctoral School and that the Fondazione Fratelli Confalonieri awarded me with a post-doc grant that enabled me to undertake further research for this book.

Special appreciation to my parents and my sister for their patience, encouragement, and constant support.

E. Ogliari - *Birth of an Independent Ireland: Moulding the Young in the Irish Periodical Press* - Milano, LED, 2020
ISSN 2283-5628 - ISBN 978-88-7916-951-6 - https://www.ledonline.it/index.php/LCM-journal/pages/view/LCM-series

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