

## Chapter 1

### ‘An extraordinarily clever journalist’: Arthur Griffith’s editorships, 1899–1919

#### Colum Kenny

Arthur Griffith and D.P. Moran were the leading Irish journalists of the early twentieth century. Griffith (1871–1922) was more ‘advanced’ in his advocacy of political independence. His publications were successively closed down, but he resurrected his journalism under different titles. He managed, edited and wrote much of the *United Irishman* 1899–1906, *Sinn Féin* 1906–14, *Éire Ireland* 1914, *Scissors and Paste* 1914–15, *Nationality* 1915–19 and *Young Ireland: Éire Óg* 1917–23.<sup>1</sup> He might have continued in journalism had he not been elected to Dáil Éireann in 1918.

Griffith, known as ‘the father of Sinn Féin’, was a pragmatist who feared that revolutionary violence might fail. He was willing in the short-term to settle for something less than complete separation from Britain. He was single-minded and self-effacing in his dedication to the promotion of independence, but ‘did not easily tolerate any opinion which differed from his own and this made it very difficult to work with him’ according to Bulmer Hobson.<sup>2</sup> His sometimes narrow attitude is better understood in light of that dedication, for which his widow felt that he was not appropriately honoured after his death during Ireland’s civil war.<sup>3</sup>

James Connolly wrote and advertised in his pages. James Joyce admired him, if not always his sentiments, and was influenced by his publications. Griffith’s attitude towards women in public affairs has recently been praised. He supported the establishment of a Zionist state, but has been judged harshly for certain articles referring to Jews.

Described as ‘a born journalist’ by one who had worked with him on *Sinn Féin* before joining the editorial staff of the *Irish Independent*,<sup>4</sup> Griffith was warm to his friends but could seem distant or cool to mere acquaintances. This was partly due to his defective eyesight. Lyons wrote that ‘he often confessed to me that he never knew who a person was until he

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<sup>1</sup> V.E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the advanced-nationalist press [in] Ireland, 1900–22* (New York, 1985) is useful, but is not definitive and lacks an index.

<sup>2</sup> Bulmer Hobson to Seán Ó Lúing, 1958 – National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI), Ó Lúing Papers, PC 12038, box 3.

<sup>3</sup> A. Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish civil war: history and memory, 1923–2000* (Cambridge, 2003), pp 100–20. Dolan notes that Maud Griffith later burned her husband’s letters that were in her possession.

<sup>4</sup> W.M. Kenealy, ‘Arthur Griffith as editor’, *Irish Times*, 7 Jan. 1942 (NLI, Ó Lúing Papers, MS 23516, album, unidentified press cutting).

heard their voice'.<sup>5</sup> This may be why he did not join in the rebellion of 1916, apart from any strategic or other considerations. He was shy, but at times belligerent. He laboured under no illusions about his lack of qualities needed by a major political figurehead. As James Joyce put it in *Ulysses*, 'You must have a certain fascination: Parnell. Arthur Griffith is a squareheaded fellow but he has no go in him for the mob'.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Griffith's appearance and manner have invited much comment.<sup>7</sup>

Griffith's great-grandfather was an Ulster protestant who married a catholic and thus lost his inheritance. The couple moved south and raised their children as catholics.<sup>8</sup> One of their grandsons, a printer,<sup>9</sup> lived with his family on the north side of Dublin where his own son Arthur witnessed the effects of widespread poverty. The latter followed his father into printing. Aged about fourteen, he became an office-boy with the Underwoods, a Protestant family that owned a small printing firm in Dublin. Jane Underwood, well regarded by other printers, lent young Griffith books and discussed ideas with him.<sup>10</sup>

He subsequently served his apprenticeship as a compositor at the *Nation*, where his roles included that of copyholder (a proof-reader's assistant who read copy aloud to the proof-reader). He worked there with Adolphus Shields, one of Dublin's master compositors and a 'red-hot socialist and an anarchist'.<sup>11</sup> By 1891 Griffith had become a copyreader at the *Daily Independent*.<sup>12</sup> Such training suited not only apprentice printers but also aspiring journalists.

Griffith soon turned his hand at journalism. He had once spent a night alone in Glasnevin cemetery, writing about this and other matters for the Eblana society.<sup>13</sup> Now, under the joint by-line of Griffith and his close friend William Rooney, a series of eight long articles entitled 'Notable graves' appeared in Dublin's *Herald* in July 1892. Surprisingly, one was on Lord Clare, architect of the Act of Union, and another on Charles Lucas notwithstanding 'his intolerance of his Catholic countrymen ... [in] an age of bigotry', for

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<sup>5</sup> G.A. Lyons, *Some recollections of Griffith and his times* (Dublin, 1923), pp 60–1.

<sup>6</sup> J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (London, 1993), ch. 8, lines 462–3.

<sup>7</sup> S. O'Sullivan, *Essays and recollections* (Dublin, 1944), p. 104; *The Leader*, 16 Dec. 1944; J.J. Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse* (Dublin, 1948), p. 94.

<sup>8</sup> Glandon, *Griffith*, pp 65–6, cites a Monaghan genealogist, correcting Ó Luing and Colum.

<sup>9</sup> Also named Arthur, he served his apprenticeship as a letterpress printer in Shepherds of Ormond Quay and joined the Dublin Typographical Provident Society (DTPS) in 1854, later serving on that union's executive. During a trade depression, he worked in Britain for a while – DTPS statement, 2 Sept. 1949 (NLI, Ó Lúing Papers, PC 12038, box 3).

<sup>10</sup> P. Colum, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1959), pp 18–19.

<sup>11</sup> Glandon, *Griffith*, p. 37, citing a letter from Griffith's fellow-worker P.D. O'Lenihan dated 1949. Actors Barry Fitzgerald and Arthur Shields were sons of Adolphus.

<sup>12</sup> Colum, *Griffith*, p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> *Eblana: the official journal of the Leinster Literary Society*, 1:1–7 (Feb.–May 1889); essays and poems, including several by Griffith as 'Shanganagh' – NLI, MS 3493; Colum, *Griffith*, p. 22.

Clare had an independent spirit, and the ‘incorruptible’ Lucas ‘almost single-handed ... carried on the fight which Molyneux had begun and Swift continued’.<sup>14</sup> That fight was for a representative assembly separate from Westminster, albeit under a single monarch.

Later during the 1890s Griffith worked as a proof-reader on Dublin’s *Evening Telegraph*. He was employed too as a compositor at Thom’s, where the Dublin *Gazette* and the police *Hue and Cry* were printed and where they knew him as ‘the son of old Arthur Griffith, the pressman’. He is said to have been a relatively slow but methodical compositor, a fact that reduced his potential earnings when compositors were paid on a piece-work basis.<sup>15</sup> On 17 February 1894 he was admitted a member of the Dublin typographical craft union, his sponsors being Patrick Seary and Christopher Timmins, ‘two men who were prominent in Dublin Trade Union and Nationalist circles’.<sup>16</sup> Later that decade the printing trade went into recession. Early in 1897 Griffith emigrated to southern Africa. It was said that shortly before his departure Griffith had resigned from the *Evening Telegraph* after being unjustly accused of a practical joke there; writing in 1953, his son noted that the move to a warmer climate had followed a medical diagnosis of incipient tuberculosis.<sup>17</sup>

In Africa he was invited to edit the *Courant*, a small weekly paper in the sleepy town of Middelburg. This was not a success, stated Griffith himself, ‘as the Britishers withdrew their support, and the Dutchmen didn’t bother about reading a journal printed in English’.<sup>18</sup> Although editor for only a few months, he learnt useful skills, and saw that readers enjoyed a mixture of news, analysis and lighter items. His personal ‘fondness for versifying’ was evident in the *Courant*, as later in the *United Irishman*.<sup>19</sup>

Griffith returned to Dublin – ‘as poor as when leaving Ireland’, his widow later wrote. She added: ‘Poor Dan [as he was known in youth] never could make money’.<sup>20</sup> With help from his close friend William Rooney, he agreed to edit the separatist *United Irishman*. Its launch on 4 March 1899 was facilitated by two women in Belfast who had been publishing

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<sup>14</sup> Their subjects in the *Evening Herald* (*Saturday Herald* from 28 May) were Charles Lucas (13 Feb.), Jonathan Swift (5 Mar.), Patrick Delany (19 Mar.), Lord Edward Fitzgerald (2 Apr.), The Sheares brothers (23 Apr.), John FitzGibbon, Lord Clare (14 May), John Philpot Curran (4 June) and Charles Henda Bushe (16 July).

<sup>15</sup> Glandon, *Griffith*, p. 66, citing a letter of 1951 from Griffith’s neighbour and co-worker Joseph Hammond.

<sup>16</sup> DTSP statement: this indicates that towards the end of 1900 he terminated his craft union membership and ‘became a whole-time journalist’.

<sup>17</sup> *Daily Independent*, 31 Dec. 1896; Glandon, *Griffith*, p. 30, citing letters from Nevin Griffith and James Moran.

<sup>18</sup> Colum, *Griffith*, pp 33–4, but as usual giving no source; Glandon, *Griffith*, p. 12, p.30 n. 47.

<sup>19</sup> P.A. McCracken, ‘Arthur Griffith’s South African sabbatical’ and ‘The quest for the *Middelburg Courant*’, *Ireland and South Africa in modern times: Southern African-Irish studies*, 3 (1996), 227–62 & 282–9; O’Sullivan, *Essays*, p. 106, pp 108–11; ‘Shanganagh’ (Griffith), ‘At the poets’ agency’, *United Irishman*, 21 Dec. 1901.

<sup>20</sup> M. Griffith to Seán Ó Lúing, 23 Mar. 1949 – NLI, Ó Lúing Papers, PC 12038, Box 3; Colum, *Griffith*, p.8.

*Shan Van Vocht*. This title, an anglicisation of Gaelic words meaning ‘poor old woman’, echoed the name of a song from the days of the United Irishmen. Alice Milligan and Anna Johnston now closed it and gave their list of subscribers to Griffith and Rooney, who each had written at least one piece for *Shan Van Vocht*.<sup>21</sup>

‘Like everything else undertaken by Arthur Griffith, the *United Irishman* was woefully under-financed’, noted his acquaintance Padraic Colum who stated that some early numbers were penned ‘entirely’ by Griffith and Rooney. Where a by-line was given, Griffith’s pen-names included ‘Cuguan’ and ‘Shanganagh’.<sup>22</sup> His acquaintance Seán Milroy identified him also with ‘Ier’, ‘Lugh’, ‘Rathcoole’, ‘Mise’, ‘Nationalist’, ‘Old Fogey’ and ‘Mafosta’, but stated that his list was not exhaustive. Seumas O’Sullivan added ‘Viking’, Griffith’s son ‘(Joseph) Smith’ and Yeates ‘Lasairfhiona’.<sup>23</sup> James Stephens recalled that, when a required piece was not forthcoming, Griffith ‘would write the missing articles himself and write them much better than anybody else could ... He would turn out, with equal ease, an article on Red Hugh O’Neill, an appreciation of Raftery, a biographical notice, a comic ballad, or a parody on any person whom Fate, at the moment, had doomed to this treatment’.<sup>24</sup>

When Rooney died young in 1901 Griffith was devastated. But he redoubled his efforts. Maud Gonne raised funds in America for his journal and personally supported it financially. She had been impressed by the fact that Rooney and Griffith ‘both disapproved of the exclusion of women’ from the Celtic Literary Society and by the fact that they ‘gave me all the help they could’ when she established *Inghidhe na hEireann*.<sup>25</sup> She sometimes wrote articles for him. In 1900, when Victoria visited Dublin during the Boer War, police seized all copies of the *United Irishman* containing Maud Gonne’s description of her majesty as the ‘Famine Queen’. When Griffith accompanied Maud Gonne to France the following year, it was reported that English agents were ‘shadowing an Irish journalist in Paris’. In 1903 the pair again opposed a royal visit to Dublin, this time by Edward VII. Griffith ran a story alleging a Unionist conspiracy to side-line the nationalist lord mayor of Dublin. Recognising

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<sup>21</sup> *Shan Van Vocht*, 3:8, 146–9 and 3:9, 163–4; M.G. MacBride, *A servant of the Queen* (Gerrard’s Cross, 1994), p. 176; Colum, *Griffith*, p. 45; N. Shovelin, ‘*Shan Van Vocht* magazine, 1896–1899: an example of print culture’ (MA, Dublin City University, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Lyons, *Griffith*, p. 48; MacBride, *Servant*, p. 291, p. 306; Colum, *Griffith*, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Milroy to Seán Ó Lúing, 4 Sept. 1944 – NLI, Ó Lúing Papers, PC 12038, Box 3. Unhelpfully, a hand other than Milroy’s has added and then scored out ‘The Foreign Secretary’ after his list. Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish republican women* (Cork, 2010), pp 54–5 suspects that this pen-name was used for Maud Gonne and possibly for her anti-Dreyfus acquaintance Lucien Millevoye. Milroy’s own papers at NLI MSS 25,586 (1, 3–6) and 28,897–9 are unrelated to Griffith; P. Yeates, *Lockout: Dublin 1913* (Dublin, 2000), p. 133.

<sup>24</sup> J. Stephens, *Arthur Griffith, journalist and statesman* (Dublin, [1922]), pp 18–19.

<sup>25</sup> MacBride, *Servant of the Queen*, pp 94–5, 266, 306, 312–3.

the limitations of anonymous sources, W.B. Yeats told Maud Gonne that because Griffith had not stated where he got his information, 'it won't carry much weight'.<sup>26</sup> In *Ulysses*, Joyce lightly mocked the pair's campaign against soldiers in the city: 'Maud Gonne's letter about taking them off O'Connell street at night: disgrace to our Irish capital. Griffith's paper is on the same tack now: an army rotten with venereal disease: overseas or halfseasover empire'.<sup>27</sup> But Steele has praised the *United Irishman* for disproving 'a familiar feminist criticism of Irish nationalism as a movement of failed potential' and for giving a platform to women writers who were 'avidly discussed as autonomous participants in cultural and political affairs of the day'.<sup>28</sup>

Seumas O'Sullivan described Griffith then as 'the most powerful figure in national affairs'. J.J. Horgan wrote that the *United Irishman* 'quickly became the mouthpiece of a new political movement. Griffith's sincere and powerful articles soon attracted attention'. He remembered calling on Griffith:

To find him I had to climb the narrow stairs of an old house in a street running down to the Liffey. There in a dusty back office surrounded by piles of MSS [manuscripts], files, and the other odds and ends of a small newspaper office, he sat at a little table, a small, stocky man, his short-sighted eyes peering from behind thick glasses, his mouth hidden under a heavy moustache.<sup>29</sup>

H.E. Kenny claims to have been present when Griffith rebuffed an American newspaper owner who pressed the editor of the *United Irishman* to take a job in the USA as a 'paragraph writer' for £1,000 per year.<sup>30</sup>

Griffith's most influential polemic was 'The Resurrection of Hungary'. It first appeared in 1904 as a series in the *United Irishman*, and later that year as a pamphlet. It is said that 5,000 copies were sold within twenty-four hours, 'a record in the Irish publishing trade'.<sup>31</sup> The polemic expressed Griffith's own brand of nationalism. It held up the dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary as a model for Ireland, whereby the Irish and British might share one crown but each enjoy its own parliament and executive. This was a more

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<sup>26</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 7 April 1900 & 8 Oct. 1901 (citing *Morning Leader*); MacBride, *Servant*, pp 198–9 & 324.

<sup>27</sup> Joyce, *Ulysses*, ch. 5, lines 70–2.

<sup>28</sup> K. Steele, *Women, press and politics during the national revival* (NY, 2007), pp 73–4.

<sup>29</sup> O'Sullivan, *Essays*, p. 104; Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse*, p. 94.

<sup>30</sup> H.E. Kenny (Sean Ghall), 'Arthur Griffith as I knew him' (part ii), *Young Ireland*, Aug.–Sept 1922.

<sup>31</sup> Lyons, *Griffith*, p. 62; Horgan, *Parnell to Pearse*, pp 94–5.

progressive form of independence than the ‘home rule’ movement sought, but it also stopped short of full sovereignty. Sinn Féin before 1916 was without great electoral support and was pragmatically inclined. Members, for example, played a leading part in the industrial movement. It long wielded the mighty pen of Griffith rather than the revolutionary sword, and did so effectively. F.S. Lyons later wrote:

That the *United Irishman* made the impact it did was largely due to the editor himself ... Griffith was an inspired journalist who combined style and temper in a way no one else could match. He recalled both the savagery of Swift and the ruggedness of John Mitchell, but to these he added his own intensity and his own intimate knowledge of the political and economic environment about him.<sup>32</sup>

When refinancing the *United Irishman* in 1903, Griffith vaunted it as ‘the pioneer of the Irish industrial movement and the supporter of the Irish language revival movement’.<sup>33</sup> Looking back in 1923, George Lyons described the publication as ‘teeming with articles on the Irish language, history and topography. A vigorous campaign on behalf of Irish industries was kept up, and trenchant denunciations of emigration and enlistment in the British armed forces’. In 1937 Stephen Brown thought that Griffith in its pages had ‘preached an aggressive anti-British policy’. But in 1959 Padraic Colum expressed ‘surprised at the absence of attack’ in the early issues. He wrote: ‘There is nothing out-and-out in the tenor of the new weekly’. Politics, news, history, economics, literature, mythology, science, ballads and art were discussed in its pages. Contributors included J.B. and W.B. Yeats, George Moore, Edward Martyn, Æ, John Eglington, J.M. Synge and Kuno Meyer. James Stephens wrote that ‘all the poets of Ireland were then solid for Mr Griffith’.<sup>34</sup> Joyce ‘said that the *United Irishman* was the only paper in Dublin worth reading, and in fact, he used to read it every week’. Scholars have demonstrated its cultural and political influence on Joyce’s *oeuvre*.<sup>35</sup>

Griffith’s single-mindedness in the cause of Irish independence is the key to understanding his attitude towards many other matters, and even to people. He had seen the

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<sup>32</sup> F.S. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (Glasgow, 1973 ed.), p. 248.

<sup>33</sup> NLI, O’Brien Papers, MS 13,975 for the prospectus, and MS 35,262/1 (22) for a list of 64 shareholders [1904].

<sup>34</sup> Stephens, *Griffith*, p. 18; Lyons, *Griffith*, pp 45, 47, 49, 58; Brown, *Press in Ireland*, p. 41; Colum, *Griffith*, pp 46–7.

<sup>35</sup> S. Joyce, *My brother’s keeper: James Joyce’s early years*, ed. R. Ellmann (London, 1982 ed.), pp 173–4; M. Tymoczko, *The Irish Ulysses* (California, 1994), pp 229–37; T. Mecsnober, ‘James Joyce, Arthur Griffith, Trieste and the Hungarian national character’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 38:3-4 (2001), 341–59.

Irish Party at Westminster split during the Parnell scandal and observed Ireland dividing along sectarian lines in respect to home rule. He wanted nothing else to distract from the cause of Irish freedom. He liked the work of Yeats where it fitted into his own ambitions, but was disinterested in literature that did not strengthen the nationalist outlook. He disdained Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*. His eager promotion of a European political model that he over-simplified led to D.P. Moran mocking Sinn Féin as 'The Green Hungarian Band'.

As any editor may, Griffith risked provoking deadly defamation suits. His 'pugnacious style of journalism' led to a legal action that is believed to have hastened his demise at the *Middelburg Courant*.<sup>36</sup> And an action by one of his own financial backers contributed to the closure of the *Irish Figaro*. The editor of the latter journal had aggressively implied that Maud Gonne was in the pay of the British. He was pursued by lawyers and actually whipped by Griffith – for which assault the latter was prosecuted and briefly imprisoned. On his release *Inginida na h-Eireann*, the women's organization, presented Griffith with a silver-mounted blackthorn.<sup>37</sup> Another legal action killed off the *United Irishman*. On 12 August 1905 Griffith wrote and published an article referring to Michael Donor, a parish priest in Limerick who had objected to the Gaelic League holding its local 'Feis' on a Sunday. Donor claimed that Griffith had impugned his reputation and initiated what Lyons described as 'a splenetic libel action'. He was awarded damages of £50 and costs of £200 but the *United Irishman* was worth only £150, and went into liquidation. To Donor's chagrin, Griffith successfully sought a preferential payment of £50 due on his then nominal salary as editor of £208 annually. Donor's counsel described Griffith as 'the Pooh-Bah of the establishment – director, manager, editor and libeller'. Judge Johnson reportedly thought Griffith 'too saucy in his attitude'.<sup>38</sup>

However, no sooner had the struggling *United Irishman* gone than Griffith 'cheerfully rebaptized it under the still more appropriate name of *Sinn Féin*'. One of Griffith's first campaigns in this new weekly publication was for the voting system of proportional representation.<sup>39</sup> He continued to publish informed stories about exploitation and injustice; Davis writes that 'though D.P. Moran's *Leader* was to vie with him in lambasting the

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<sup>36</sup> McCracken, 'Arthur Griffith's South African sabbatical,' 246–9.

<sup>37</sup> Lyons, *Griffith*, pp 10–11.

<sup>38</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 12 Mar. 1906; *Irish Times*, 12 Mar. & 22 Feb. 1906 (includes offending text), 13 and 20 July 1907; *Sunday Independent*, 11 Mar. 1906; Lyons, *Griffith*, p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> Lyons, *Griffith*, p. 69.

Shoneen and West Briton, Griffith inaugurated a period of muck-raking protest journalism which had certain affinities with the American radical periodicals of his day'.<sup>40</sup>

The editor of *Sinn Féin* protested not only its patriotic but also its journalistic credentials. He thought it a cut above other papers.<sup>41</sup> The *Cork Examiner*, for example, was 'notorious for the lack of principle and backbone'. The failure of the daily press to cover more Irish stories was lamented.<sup>42</sup> Griffith briefly published *Sinn Féin* itself as a daily, from August 1909 until January 1910. P.S. O'Hegarty then accused him of sensationalism in his attempts to keep the daily afloat, condemning his 'scandal-making' and 'encouragement of mania in ... controversy' and regretting that the organisation itself had no control over the newspaper of the same name. O'Hegarty also criticised Griffith's *Sinn Féin* paper for being 'chiefly a manifestation to the Unionsists of how they may be Unionists and good patriots at the same time. Our business is to show Unionists and Home Rulers that until they have become Nationalists they cannot be good patriots'. Despite all that, O'Hegarty still considered it 'the best daily paper in Ireland'!<sup>43</sup>

'The Daily National Industrial Journal', as *Sinn Féin* styled itself, incurred such debts that Griffith eventually had to mortgage his printing plant to save even a reduced weekly edition. He earned extra money from time to time by writing for Dublin's *Evening Telegraph*, including in 1913 seventeen substantial and illustrated features on Irish language revivalists.<sup>44</sup> In the years preceding the First World War he was behind an attempt to launch an Irish news agency too, and published an annual *Sinn Féin Year Book*.<sup>45</sup>

His reputation has been diminished by some of what he wrote or published. On 23 April 1904 passages appeared in the *United Irishman* referring to attacks on Jews in Limerick and to a priest there 'who warned the people against being caught in their usurious toils'. The writer – presumably Griffith himself – suggested that accusations of a persecution were not justified by 'a few charges of trivial assaults preferred by Jews':

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<sup>40</sup> R. Davis, *Arthur Griffith* (Dundalk, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Sinn Féin*, 18 Aug. 1906 & 8 Dec. 1906.

<sup>42</sup> *Sinn Féin*, 8 Dec. 1906 & 22 & 29 Sept. 1906.

<sup>43</sup> *The Irish Nation and The Peasant*, 15 Jan. 1910; 'P.S. O'Hegarty', in J. McGuire & J. Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography* (Cambridge, 2009) (hereafter *DIB*).

<sup>44</sup> *Evening Telegraph* (Saturday ed.), 15 Mar–23 Aug. 1913 for Vallancey, Halliday, O'Reilly, Barron, Petrie, O'Donovan, O'Curry, Hudson, Pigot, Dodd, Ferguson, MacHale, Reeves, Gilbert, O'Growney, Wilde, Cleaver (in that order).

<sup>45</sup> NLI, Fionán MacColuim MS 24,422; Lyons, *Griffith*, p. 69; Beaslai, *Griffith*, 16; C. Kenny, *Irish patriot, publisher and advertising agent: Kevin J. Kenny* (Bray, 2011), pp 22–3.



The Jews of Great Britain and Ireland have united, as is their wont, to crush the Christian who dares to block their path or to point them out for what they are – nine-tenths of them – usurers and parasites of industry. In this category we do not include the Zionist minority of the Jews, who include those honest and patriotic Jews who desire the reestablishment of the Hebrew nation in Palestine – the last thing on earth the majority desire. Attack a Jew – other than a Zionist Jew – and all Jewry comes to his assistance ... Thus, when three years ago, the Recorder of Dublin, Sir Frederick Falkiner, denounced in strong terms the extortion which the Jews of Dublin practiced on the poor, Jewry combined and was powerful enough to rig the whole daily Press against him, and to influence official quarters to force the Recorder to withdraw.

Griffith's views on what later became known as 'the Limerick pogrom', along with some earlier pungent references in his paper to the Dreyfus affair in France and a few comments on other matters involving Jews, have been described by Roy Foster as anti-Semitic 'ravings'.<sup>46</sup> Articles on Dreyfus included a number by 'The Foreign Secretary', and may well have been written by that 'vehement anti-Dreyfusard' Maud Gonne.<sup>47</sup> Glandon notes that D.P. Moran 'also advised his readers how they might avoid the ascendancy of the Jews in the financial affairs of Ireland – a frequent theme in some nationalist and Labourite newspapers'. Maye and Yeates refer to prejudiced pieces in Larkin's *Irish Worker*.<sup>48</sup>

Yet Griffith also published criticism of what had appeared in his *United Irishman* relating to Jews in Limerick and, in an apparent paradox, expressed strong support for a Jewish state in Palestine. Cheyette claims that this merely 'corresponds to the historical split in perception of the Jews as at once a noble, ancient people, but unacceptable as individuals in modern society'. Laffan explains that 'although he supported Zionism, he attacked Jewish "cosmopolitans" such as the "Jew-Jingo brigands" of Johannesburg'.<sup>49</sup> Nationalists then felt that Irish banks, controlled by protestant Unionists, were more willing to assist immigrant

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<sup>46</sup> *United Irishman*, 29 July, 23 Sept., 14 Oct. & 11 Nov. 1899; R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: connections in Irish and English history* (London, 1993), p. 32; B. Maye, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1997), p. 365.

<sup>47</sup> *United Irishman*, 29 July, 16, 23 & 30 Sept. 1899; 'Maud Gonne', *DIB*; Matthews, *Renegades*, pp 54–6; N. Davison, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the construction of Jewish identity: culture, biography, and 'The Jew' in modernist Europe* (Cambridge, 1998), pp 68–72 for Griffith and Dreyfus.

<sup>48</sup> *The Leader*, 4 June 1904; *Irish Worker*, 17 July, 5 & 26 Aug., 16 Sept. 1911; Glandon, *Griffith*, p. 9; Maye, *Griffith*, p. 362; Yeates, *Lockout*, p. 547 and plates for cartoon.

<sup>49</sup> *United Irishman*, 23 Jan., 23 Apr., 14 & 28 May 1904; B. Cheyette, *Between race and culture: representations of the Jew in English and American literature* (Stanford, 1996), p. 105; 'Arthur Griffith', *DIB* (by M. Laffan).

Jewish businessmen than to assist incipient Irish-Ireland industrialists and many resented what they saw as the aggressive lending tactics of some door-to-door Jewish money-lenders.

No matter what he very occasionally published about Jews in general, Griffith was clearly willing to forgive those who converted to nationalism. This partly explains why he readily worked with Jews in Ireland who supported his own cause. In his article of 23 April 1904 he proclaimed that, ‘for the small minority – the Zionist Jews – the patriotic ones who desire to reconstruct the Jewish nation, and who feel bitterly the humiliation of their race through the sordid pursuit of gold by the majority – we have the same esteem we have for all patriotic and lofty minded men’. These are not the sentiments of an outright anti-Semite. He eschewed antagonism to Judaism as a religion, claiming in the same issue of his paper that ‘certainly no one in Ireland has ever displayed the slightest hostility to the Jew on account of his religious beliefs’.

As in the *United Irishman*, there were in *Sinn Féin* very few articles referring to Jews. One was by William Bulfin, in a long series later published as a best-selling book and reprinted many times. On his ‘Rambles in Erin’ as the series and book were both entitled, Bulfin describes a Jewish pedlar and others of that trade in a racially demeaning manner.<sup>50</sup>

Far from being obsessed with Jews as anti-Semites frequently are, Griffith in his journals for twenty years rarely mentioned them. Laffan has described Griffith’s offensive attitudes as the ‘habits or prejudices of his youth’ and added that ‘with occasional lapses, he outgrew them’. O’Riordan addresses the *Sinn Féin* context.<sup>51</sup> Others are harsh. Lentin and McVeigh condemn what they call his ‘proto-Fascist’ ideas, writing that ‘Griffith was indeed “a repugnant figure”, the enemy of other races, the working classes, and no friend to the Rights of Man ... The possibility that had Griffith become the head of state for any length of time, he might have put his anti-Semitic politics into effect is, of course, even more chilling’.<sup>52</sup> Yet Griffith supported the establishment of a Zionist state from no later than 1904 and appears to have modified or abandoned any anti-Semitic views after that. He made Jewish friends such as Jacob Elyan and Eddie Lipman.<sup>53</sup> Would Michael Noyk, future life councillor and honorary solicitor of the Dublin Hebrew Congregation, have supported a Jew-

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<sup>50</sup> *Sinn Féin*, 4 Aug. 1906. The author, ‘Che buono’, is explicitly identified as Bulfin on the front page of *Sinn Féin*, 18 Aug. 1906.

<sup>51</sup> M. O’Riordan, ‘Anti-Semitism in Irish politics – the *Sinn Féin* tradition’, *Irish Jewish yearbook 1984–85*, 15–27.

<sup>52</sup> *DIB* at Griffith; R. Lentin & R. McVeigh, *After optimism? Ireland, racism and globalisation* (Dublin, 2006), p. 116.

<sup>53</sup> Colum, *Griffith*, p. 173; L. Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland from earliest times to the year 1910* (Shannon, 1972), pp 176, 202, 212–3, 333; *DIB* at Griffith.

hater and drank with him often in The Bailey? Noyk, Irish republican and son of a Litvak immigrant, first met Griffith about 1910, and both Noyk and Bethel Solomons that year subscribed to a fund to build him a house. Noyk considered him a 'very close friend', and they frequently went walking together: 'I spent many evenings in his home where I got a very intimate knowledge of his character'. He visited him in Reading Gaol in 1916 and long acted as his solicitor. Their children played together and Griffith's daughter was a flower girl at Noyk's wedding.<sup>54</sup> Hyman thought that Griffith's earlier anti-Semitism 'stemmed from inherent xenophobia rather than from principle'.<sup>55</sup> Some views that he published are 'repugnant', but his ideology was democratic rather than fascist.

There is much in Griffith's journalism to undermine the extravagant claim that he was 'the enemy' of the working-class and 'no friend to the Rights of Man'. He wrote a great deal about matters that deeply affected the lives of working people. He was no socialist but many articles in his papers are concerned with justice, slums and economic growth. Although at times very hostile to James Larkin, in 1913 he had what both Noyk and Yeates have indicated was a warm regard for Larkin's principal lieutenant James Connolly and he praised the latter for suggesting a conciliation board to resolve industrial disputes.<sup>56</sup> Would Connolly, his acquaintance of earlier years,<sup>57</sup> have advertised the *Irish Worker* in Griffith's *Éire Ireland* during the year following the great 1913 lock-out had he believed that his old acquaintance was anti-worker? In 1922 H.E. Kenny claimed that Pearse and Connolly had told him 'several times' that they considered Griffith to be 'the truest of friends'.<sup>58</sup> Bulfin's views on Jews, published in *Sinn Féin*, did not deter the socialist Connolly from citing Bulfin favourably in another respect when Connolly soon afterwards penned a book review for *Sinn Féin*.<sup>59</sup> Nor did they stop Joyce, creator of the Hungarian-Irish rambling Jew Leopold Bloom, from endorsing that same autumn Griffith's journalism as a whole:

In my opinion Griffith's speech at the meeting in the National Council justifies the existence of his paper [*Sinn Féin*]. He, probably, has to lease out his columns to scribblers

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<sup>54</sup> Bureau of Military History (hereafter BMH), 1913–21 WS 707, Michael Noyk (see NLI, MS 18, 975 or <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0707.pdf>), p. 1, p. 13; Maye, *Griffith*, p. 370; 'Michael Noyk', *DIB*.

<sup>55</sup> Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, pp 213 & 341.

<sup>56</sup> *Sinn Féin*, 6 Sept., 4, 11 & 25 Oct., 1 Nov. 1913 (for example); Noyk, (n. 54 above), p. 3; Davis, *Griffith*, p. 15; Yeates, *Lockout*, pp 132–4 & 352–7.

<sup>57</sup> Lyons, *Griffith*, pp 12–14 for Connolly and Griffith falling out over the possibility of effective armed insurrection in Ireland in late 1899, pp 19–20.

<sup>58</sup> Kenny, 'Griffith'.

<sup>59</sup> *Sinn Féin*, 27 Oct. 1906.

like Gogarty and Colum, and virgin martyrs like his sub-editor. But, as far as my knowledge of Irish affairs goes, he was the first person in Ireland to revive the separatists idea on modern lines nine years ago ... A great deal of his programme perhaps is absurd but at least it tries to inaugurate some commercial life for Ireland and to tell you the truth once or twice in Trieste I felt myself humiliated when I heard the little Galatti girl sneering at my impoverished country ... what I object to most of all in his paper is that it is educating the people of Ireland on the old pap of racial hatred whereas anyone can see that if the Irish question exists, it exists for the Irish proletariat chiefly.<sup>60</sup>

This mention of ‘racial hatred’ is sometimes assumed to refer to anti-Semitism but, from its context, it was at least as much aimed at comments on the English in a recent article by Joyce’s old acquaintance Oliver St John Gogarty (‘Buck Mulligan’ of *Ulysses*). This appeared in the first part of a series in *Sinn Féin* between August and December 1906, under the title ‘Ugly England’.<sup>61</sup>

In 1901 Griffith had, through the *United Irishman*, opposed the censorship of a controversial pamphlet by James Joyce. Later in Italy Joyce regularly received Griffith’s publications, and had a letter published in *Sinn Féin* when Irish book publishers proved unwilling to print a reference to Edward VII’s adulteries in his *Dubliners*. He welcomed Griffith’s election in 1922 as president of Dáil Éireann.<sup>62</sup> More mischievously he had a character in *Ulysses* claim that the Bloom ‘gave the ideas for Sinn Fein to Griffith to put in his paper’.<sup>63</sup> Was this the origin of later reported rumours that Griffith had ‘a Jewish adviser-ghostwriter’?<sup>64</sup>

Griffith wrote sympathetically about the plight of colonised Africans. However, he also excused John Mitchell’s reactionary views on slavery, arguing that one might support Irish independence without adopting modern theories of humanitarianism and universalism. This may be understood by reference to his desire to see Ireland take its place equally alongside other European states, and by doing so be entitled implicitly to share their attitude

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<sup>60</sup> Letter to Stanislaus Joyce, 25 Sept. 1906, in Richard Ellmann (ed.), *Letters of James Joyce*, ii (Viking 1966), pp 164–8.

<sup>61</sup> *Sinn Féin*, part 1 (18 Sept.), part 2 (24 Nov.) and part 3 (1 Dec.).

<sup>62</sup> *United Irishman*, 2 Nov. 1901 for pieces by Frank Fay and by ‘Cuguan’ (Griffith); *Sinn Féin* 2 Sept. 1911; R. Ellmann, *The Consciousness of James Joyce* (Oxford, 1977), pp 55, 63–6, 86–90; R. Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford, 1982 ed.), pp 237, 238–9, 334–5, 533; A.J. Jordan, *Arthur Griffith with James Joyce & W.B. Yeats: liberating Ireland* (Dublin, 2013), pp 29–37, 53–4, 90–4, 98–101.

<sup>63</sup> Joyce, *Ulysses*, ch. 12, lines 1574–5. Sometimes misquoted and truncated as ‘the idea for Sinn Féin’.

<sup>64</sup> H. Kenner, *Ulysses* (Baltimore, 1987), p. 133.

of racial supremacy as a sign of parity.<sup>65</sup> His antagonism towards international socialism and Larkin's strikes can be explained likewise, for he suspected British trades unions of weakening national sentiment and thus reinforcing the status quo in terms of imperial sovereignty.

It was for his opinions on national issues, not on race, that the government suppressed *Sinn Féin*. He soon replaced it with *Éire Ireland*, which survived for just thirty issues from 26 October until 4 December 1914, being daily from the second issue. Its title was the name of the island in both Irish and English and it was anti-Redmond, being against Irish involvement in the European war that had recently begun. Its launch issue included an article by Patrick Pearse on the Irish Volunteers, and its editor proclaimed that:

Today we issue the first number of *Ireland* in order to report the proceedings of the Irish Volunteer Convention, which the prostitute daily Press of Ireland will, in so far as it does not suppress, attempt to misrepresent and distort ... We intend that Ireland shall have a voice in the daily Press of her country, that the recruiting sergeants shall no longer bellow and the bribed journalists blaspheme in her name ... We need money, and we ask for it, from ... the Irish people, premising [*sic*] that no journalist connected with the paper will accept money for his labour .

Griffith seemingly did not expect *Éire Ireland* to last long or to contain much besides opinion pieces, for he can scarcely have expected it to be sustained indefinitely without paying people to write for it. We have seen that he himself was allowed an income as editor of the *United Irishman*, and a journalist who had worked with him on *Sinn Féin* later wrote that 'Arthur Griffith always insisted upon men who helped him taking some recompense for their labours'.<sup>66</sup>

Griffith used *Éire Ireland* to attack existing publications. In the second issue, in a piece headed 'The Castle and the Castle Journal', he claimed that it was the wife of the lord lieutenant who 'suggests the editorial policy of the *Freeman's Journal*', describing her as 'the head of the British Government in Ireland – for, as everybody knows, Lady Aberdeen, not Lord Aberdeen, is the person who discharges the real duties of the Lord Lieutenant'. He followed this in the next two numbers by more on the alleged political relationship between

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<sup>65</sup> Maye, *Griffith*, pp 356–60; J. Mitchell, *Jail journal* (Dublin, [1914]), preface; *Evening Telegraph*, 18 Oct. 1913 for an anonymous review of *Jail journal* that praises Griffith's preface.

<sup>66</sup> Kenealy – NLI, MS 23516.

Lady Aberdeen and W.H. Brayden, editor of the *Freeman's Journal*.<sup>67</sup> Other articles about media included one giving the views of the Irish-American *Irish World* on recruiting propaganda and an intriguing piece headed 'How cinema war pictures are faked'.<sup>68</sup> It also carried some sports reports, and advertisements. Among the latter, in that year following the great 1913 lockout, were notices for 'the *Irish Worker* – champion of the Rights of Labour', published at Liberty Hall.<sup>69</sup> A number of articles contested claims of German atrocities. Readers were also advised, in a special notice in what transpired to be the last issue, to 'Look out for *Nationality* – edited by Arthur Griffith', although this journal did not in fact appear immediately thereafter.

On 4 December 1914 Griffith wrote a letter to the readers of *Éire Ireland*. Printed separately, this was signed by himself and his collaborator, the future president of Ireland 'Seaghan T. O'Ceallaig'. He explained that his printer ('Mr Mahon') felt unable to continue producing the journal because the *Irish Worker* had just become the latest nationalist publication to be suppressed and to have its printing machinery seized. Griffith claimed that he himself, to the best of his knowledge, had 'complied with British military orders' in respect to what journalists were free to write about during the war.<sup>70</sup>

Just eight days after Griffith ceased publishing *Éire Ireland*, he was back in business with a new title, *Scissors and Paste*. Its first number appeared on 12 December 1914, and the last of its twenty-two issues on 27 February 1915. Four pages long, it was published on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The first number contained a short editorial headed 'Ourselves,' this word being a translation of 'Sinn Féin'. In it he stated that:

It is high treason for an Irishman to argue with the sword the right of his small nationality [*sic*] to equal political freedom with Belgium, or Serbia, or Hungary. It is destruction to the property of his printer now when he argues with the pen. Hence, while England is fighting the battle of Small Nationalities, **Ireland** [the use here of bold typeface presumably a reference to the title of Griffith's preceding publication] is reduced to **Scissors and Paste**. Up to the present the sale and use of these instruments have not been prohibited by the British Government in Ireland.

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<sup>67</sup> *Éire Ireland*, 2, 3 & 4 Nov. 1914. For Griffith's long-standing antipathy towards the *Freeman's Journal*, see F.M. Larkin, 'Arthur Griffith and the *Freeman's Journal*', in K. Rafter (ed.), *Irish journalism before independence: more a disease than a profession* (Manchester, 2011), pp 174–85.

<sup>68</sup> *Éire Ireland*, 27 Nov. 1914.

<sup>69</sup> See 10 & 12 Nov. 1914.

<sup>70</sup> NLI: this letter may be found at the end of the complete run of *Éire Ireland* on microfilm at the NLI.

This editorial was one of very few original statements or reports in *Scissors and Paste*, which consisted almost wholly of extracts from publications at home and abroad as well as quotations from Irish patriotic writers of earlier generations and occasional verses from old songs or poems. The newspapers quoted included the London *Daily Mail*, the Dublin *Daily Express*, the *New York American*, the *New York Staatszeitung*, the *Irish Independent*, the *Irish Times*, the London *Daily Citizen*, the London *Times*, the *Meath Chronicle*, the Sydney *Bulletin*, the Buenos Aires *Southern Cross*, the *Catholic Bulletin*, the *Catholic Times*, the Manchester *Labour Leader*, the *Irish Journalist*, the Belfast *Northern Whig* and the Belfast *Irish News*. In the first issue, for example, the *Daily Express* is relied on for its report on the British prohibition of sales of the *Irish World*, an Irish-American paper that had supported John Redmond until the recruiting campaign opened, and of the *Gaelic American*, a Clan na Gael paper edited by John Devoy.

Among earlier writers quoted in *Scissors and Paste* to provide freestanding observations in place of original editorials one finds Thomas Davis, Samuel Ferguson, the Marquis of Dufferin, Parnell (on how the *Freeman's Journal* impeded the National Land League), Henry Grattan, Edmund Burke, T.D. Sullivan (died 1914) and even Victor Hugo. A living contemporary, Bernard Shaw, is also quoted. As the editorial in the very first issue demonstrates, *Scissors and Paste* was not entirely without content written by its editor. One finds also in the first issue an article and advertisement relating to Sinn Féin's Aonach na Nollag, the annual Irish goods fair which that year took place at the Abbey Theatre. On 2 January 1915, it reported that the *Irish Worker* had reappeared, having been printed by the press of the Socialist Labour Party in Glasgow. It noted that James Connolly was editing it in place of James Larkin who was in America. On 10 February it reported that the *Worker* has been seized when the vessel carrying it arrived in Dublin.

In the final issue of *Scissors and Paste* before its suppression, Griffith reported that the assault on Turkish forces at the Dardanelles had begun and he included some pointed material. In lieu of an editorial was 'The Question', a quotation from Grattan in which the patriot asked what right had England to make laws for Ireland. A lift from the *Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart* turned out to be other than merely devotional, including as it did a statement by a German soldier that 'we have won our victories by the Rosary'. The *Glasgow Forward* is quoted as asserting that 'A good many people seem to believe that the words of their [German] National Anthem "Deutschland Uber Alles" ("Germany Above All") show what an arrogant lot the Germans are. Compare with Rule Britannia and judge'. There is also a striking piece from the London *Daily Express* that itself cites a German report

in the *Deutsche Zeitung* that the number of recruits to the British army has dwindled to nothing and that emigration to America is ‘proceeding on a scale never before seen’. The final issue also gives notice of a forthcoming address by Griffith, promised for 4 March to commemorate the birthday of Robert Emmet in 1778.

The twenty-third issue of *Scissors and Paste*, due on 3 March 1915, never appeared. On that morning newspapers reported that police and military police had entered the editorial offices of Griffith’s publication in Middle Abbey Street and taken possession of various papers, and that *Scissors and Paste* had been suppressed under the Defence of the Realm Act. Police also visited the offices of its printer, Patrick Mahon of Yarnhall Street, and ensured that the machinery was dismantled in such a manner as to prevent its further use.<sup>71</sup>

Never long silenced, Griffith was back in print in June 1915 with the launch of *Nationality*. He at first employed a Belfast Protestant firm as printer, hoping thereby to reduce the chance of being suppressed again. *Nationality* proved so popular that it required two reprints in its first four days and is said to have achieved a circulation larger than any Irish publication save the daily *Independent*. Davis states that a newspapers survey in 1915 found Griffith to be the best-known nationalist in Dublin. The chief secretary Augustine Birrell is reported to have described him as ‘an extraordinarily clever journalist’ and the *Catholic Bulletin* thought him ‘brilliant’.<sup>72</sup> After the Easter Rising of 1916, publication of *Nationality* was suspended until a new series began in February 1917. It ran until 1919. Griffith was imprisoned twice during its lifetime, and on the first occasion he was frustrated in Gloucester Prison that he could not get copies of *Nationality*. It was being edited by others in his absence and sued by one Malcolm Lyon – on behalf of the government he believed.<sup>73</sup> Ever the editor, even in jail Griffith started up a manuscript journal entitled the *Gloucester Diamond*.<sup>74</sup> Griffith is said also to have taken editorial charge of *Young Ireland: Éire Óg*, which first appeared on 5 May 1917. It was a paper founded for young people but ‘soon transformed into an orthodox Sinn Féin publication’.<sup>75</sup>

In 1919 P.S. O’Hegarty defined Griffith’s role as a journalist more kindly than he had nine years earlier, noting in particular that ‘as leader-writer he is unequalled, and as a writer of obituary notices he is unsurpassable’. But, it had to be admitted, ‘he always splits his

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<sup>71</sup> *Irish Times and Freeman’s Journal*, 3 Mar. 1915.

<sup>72</sup> *Catholic Bulletin*, 7 (Feb. 1917), 85; Béaslaí, ‘Griffith’; *Evening Press*, 17 June 1955; L. Ó Bróin, *The chief secretary: Augustine Birrell in Ireland* (Connecticut, 1970), p. 120; Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, pp 18, 20, 22.

<sup>73</sup> NLI, Murphy Papers, MS 46,060 for nine relevant letters and MS 35,262/1 (2) for another.

<sup>74</sup> Colum, *Griffith*, p. 190.

<sup>75</sup> Davis, *Arthur Griffith*, p. 24; Glandon, *Advanced-nationalist press*, p. 282.



infinities'.<sup>76</sup> To conclude, this overview of Arthur Griffith's journalism demonstrates that his entire output deserves closer scrutiny than it has received to date, and that judgments about him might be better made in the light of further research.

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<sup>76</sup> P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Féin: an illumination* (Dublin, 1919), pp 15–16, 38, 29–33.