

Young Ireland and *The Nation*: Nationalist Children's Culture in the Late Nineteenth Century¹

IN EARLY APRIL 1900, Queen Victoria arrived in the royal yacht at Kingstown Harbour (now Dún Laoghaire) for what was to be her final visit to Ireland. As with her previous visits, this royal arrival was well documented by Irish newspapers. Unionist newspapers welcomed the Queen's visit as an opportunity to strengthen the faltering union between Britain and Ireland and provided descriptions of the fanfare and celebration with which her Irish supporters greeted her.² Nationalist newspapers, on the other hand, were inclined to denounce her trip as a propagandist stunt aimed at recruiting Irishmen to fight with the British army in the Boer War.³ A striking feature that united the otherwise divergent unionist and nationalist accounts was the prominence afforded to children's participation in the event.⁴ By contrast, the presence and input of Irish children during the Queen's earlier visits in 1849, 1853, and 1861 were barely remarked upon in newspaper accounts of the day.⁵ Such a disparity suggests that during a period of four decades, between 1861 and 1900, children came to be identified as a cohesive, publicly visible group of some impor-

1. My deepest thanks to Máirín Nic Eoin, Jimmy Kelly, and the *Éire-Ireland* reviewers who offered me valuable advice when drafting this essay. I am grateful to the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences for providing me with a postdoctoral fellowship to conduct this research.

2. *Irish Times*, 13 April 1900; *Irish Times*, 1 May 1900.

3. See Margaret Ward, *Maud Gonne: Ireland's Joan of Arc* (London: Pandora, 1990), 58–62.

4. Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 48–50.

5. For an account of Queen Victoria's visits to and relationship with Ireland, see James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty: Nationalism and Monarchy in Ireland during the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001).

tance within Irish society, mirroring the growing public presence of the young in other western societies.⁶

This essay will explore and demonstrate the increasing visibility of children by tracing the evolution of Irish nationalist children's culture during the late nineteenth century through a series of case studies on emerging child-centered organizations: the children's magazine *Young Ireland* (1875–91), the previously undocumented Children's Land League, the Southwark Junior Irish Literary Club, and the "Irish Fireside Club." These organizations were connected through the most influential promoter of nationalist ideology of the period, *The Nation*—the newspaper founded in 1842 by Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy, and John Dillon, all members of the Young Ireland movement.⁷ The young men connected with *The Nation* sought to create a new nationalist hub from where they could "rally round us the young intellect of the country" as readers, writers, political activists, and indeed consumers.⁸ Although *The Nation* changed editorship and ownership several times before eventually merging with the *Irish Weekly Independent* in 1900, its aim of uniting Ireland's young intellectuals went beyond mere aspiration. Its promotion of women as writers and activists, long before they had the right to vote, has been acknowledged elsewhere.⁹ However, the newspaper's interest in and encouragement of children's literature and activism, most often under

6. British children's culture, for example, evolved from clubs and movements such as the temperance-driven "Band of Hope" (est. 1847) and the "Dicky Bird Society" (est. 1876), which promoted animal welfare; to the Boys Brigade (est. 1883) and later the Boy Scouts (est. 1908), which actively embraced public display. See Lilian Lewis Shiman, "The Band of Hope Movement: Respectable Recreation for Working-Class Children," *Victorian Studies* 17:1 (1973), 49–74. A "Hibernian Band of Hope Union" and juvenile temperance clubs also existed in Ireland. See *The Nation*, 2 Oct. 1869; *Freeman's Journal*, 10 Oct. 1879.

7. See Richard Davis, *The Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 9–36; John N. Molony, *A Soul Came into Ireland: Thomas Davis 1814–1845: A Biography* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1995), 83–110.

8. *The Nation*, 15 Oct. 1842.

9. See T.F. O'Sullivan, *The Young Irishmen* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1945), 7; Brega Webb and Frances Clarke, "Eva (Mary Anne) Kelly," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 5, ed. James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 71–72. As pen names were often used by contributors to *The Nation*, it can be difficult to establish who was involved. However, the *Irish Monthly* provides substantial information on the names used by various contributors. See "Anonymities Revealed," *Irish Monthly* (Nov. 1889), 609–15.

the influence of such women, has received little scholarly attention to date. The increasing visibility and importance of Irish children in the late nineteenth century raises two major questions. Why did political activists pursue the allegiance of the Irish child during this period? How, among the middle and upper classes, did increased consumerism contribute to and accompany the growth of children's culture?

IDEOLOGY AND THE IRISH CHILD

The actions of Dublin-based unionist and nationalist women's committees testify that Irish children had come to be viewed as cultural and political capital by the dawn of the twentieth century.¹⁰ From the Queen's springtime visit until the summer of 1900, these committees competed openly with each other to attract the city's children into their respective ideological camps by offering them sweet treats, including cakes, biscuits, and oranges. On the first morning of the Queen's visit, in April 1900, several thousand of Dublin's poorest children were given a free breakfast in Kingstown Town Hall, organized by a Unionist Ladies' Committee and the ladies of the Police-Aided Children's Clothing Society. Three days later, "The Children's Day" held in the Phoenix Park attracted school-groups and children's clubs, from city and country, who waved their Union Jacks and sang and cheered the Queen.¹¹ The London-based *Pall Mall Gazette* offered an enthusiastic report on the event:

Through a mile of cheering, shouting, singing children Her Majesty drove slowly, and evidently with the keenest delight. The "Children's Day" was an immense success. Fifty-two thousand children will carry it into the future, and Ireland will not be able to forget it, even if she would, for two generations at least. When the children are men and women, not the least memorable event in their lives will be the day when they saw towards the end of her long and illustrious reign the most famous Queen in English history.¹²

10. Although these committees were dominated by women, a few men were involved in both.

11. *Irish Times*, 9 April 1900; *Weekly Irish Times*, 21 April 1900. This event is most extensively analyzed in Janette Condon, "The Patriotic Children's Treat: Irish Nationalism and Children's Culture at the Twilight of Empire," *Irish Studies Review* 8:2 (2000), 167–78.

12. See *Irish Times*, 10 April 1900.

The most vocal nationalists of the time, wanting to play down what unionist publications such as the *Irish Times* hailed as the success of the Queen's visit, disputed the figure of 52,000 children in attendance at "The Children's Day." The *United Irishman*, edited by Arthur Griffith, reported that "only 5,000 went to her Majesty's treat in the Phoenix Park."¹³ Immediately recognizing the propagandist implications of the children's breakfast treat and "The Children's Day," Griffith lamented in an editorial that "[o]ur opponents have long ago recognized the importance of organising their youth."¹⁴ Leading nationalists reacted immediately to counteract the children's treats offered by Dublin unionists and to win children over to the nationalist movement—or, in Griffith's words, to reward those children "who refused to be bribed into parading before the Queen of England."¹⁵ A nationalist women's committee, which would soon become known as Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland), was founded to organize the Patriotic Children's Treat, which, according to the same nationalists, catered for up to 30,000 children in Clontarf Park, Dublin, on 1 July 1900.¹⁶ This orchestrated, counter-propagandist event was more militant than those that accompanied the Queen's visit. The nationalist *Weekly Freeman* reported that "a remarkable and not unattractive spectacle was the marching round the Park of small parties of youths carrying Boer or other flags. These incidents caused the Park to resemble a miniature manoeuvring ground."¹⁷ Indeed, the same reporter declared that this event was "most inspiring to those who hope for the future National greatness of Ireland."¹⁸

Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, the child's mind was viewed as fertile terrain in need of control and direction. Like many religious groups, the Irish women seeking to cultivate children as future promoters of a given ideology believed that their minds were a soft wax in need of molding.¹⁹ Janette Condon notes that just

13. *United Irishman*, 7 July 1900.

14. *United Irishman*, 28 April 1900.

15. Quoted in Ward, *Maud Gonne: Ireland's Joan of Arc*, 63.

16. *United Irishman*, 12 May 1900; Ward, *Maud Gonne: Ireland's Joan of Arc*, 62–63.

17. *Weekly Freeman*, 7 July 1900.

18. *Ibid.*

19. The seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke was most often credited with this "soft wax" theory. See Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation's*

as British authors of children's literature often viewed their readers as future receptacles and transmitters of the ideology of empire, Irish children's literature was also "colonized" by "political motivations."²⁰ Irish nationalists were acutely aware that in their efforts to establish a nationalist children's culture through magazines, newspaper columns, clubs, and societies, they were attempting to prevent children from being influenced by the imperialist ideology of children's magazines such as *Boys Own Magazine* (est. 1855) and *Boys of England* (1866), both readily available in Ireland.²¹ These competing ideologies had become evident well before the Queen's visit in 1900. For example, young recruits joined both the unionist Dublin Battalion of the Boys Brigade (a precursor of the Boy Scouts, established in Scotland in 1883, which boasted several hundred Irish members by 1894) and the nationalist "Irish Fireside Club" (attached to the *Weekly Freeman*), which by the turn of the century was the only Irish children's club to have tens of thousands of young members.²²

CHILDREN'S CONSUMERISM AND LITERARY CULTURE

Scholars who have touched on early nineteenth-century Irish childhood have generally focused on pedagogical practices and literary material available to children within the educational system, both before and after the establishment of the national school system in 1831. Their collective work is thorough and insightful: J.R.R. Adams ad-

Young: Education and Public Doctrine in Britain, 1750–1850 (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 34.

20. Janette Condon, "Victoria's Own?: Discourses of Cultural Imperialism and Nationalist Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature in Ireland" (Ph.D. Thesis, NUI Galway, 1999), vi. Condon's thesis is the only substantial, yet unpublished, work to date to address nineteenth-century Irish nationalist children's literature.

21. See *Irish Fireside*, 27 Feb. 1886; Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, eds., *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Gent: Academia Press, 2009), 69–70.

22. *Irish Times*, 15 May 1894; Paul Wilkinson, "English Youth Movements, 1908–30," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4:2 (1969), 4–5; Róna Nic Congáil, "'Fiction, Amusement, Instruction': The Irish Fireside Club and the Educational Ideology of the Gaelic League," *Éire-Ireland* 44.1&2 (Spring/Summer 2009), 97. A "Parnell Irish National Boys' Brigade" also existed around this time. See *Southern Star*, 12 Oct. 1895.

dresses the education of lower-class Catholic children in the “hedge school”; Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber examine the moral literature produced by Protestant societies for schools; and John Logan focuses both on reading in the national schools and on the establishment’s reluctance to teach or use Irish in the national school system.²³ This scholarship makes clear that just as early nineteenth-century religious groups competed to influence children through the moral literature they distributed in the schools, so too did politically motivated forces later seek to influence the young. The growth of nineteenth-century consumerism, specifically of literary consumerism associated with middle- and upper-class leisure, became another significant vehicle of influence. Its spread was facilitated by increased literacy levels, postfamine urbanization, and better communication channels—including the expanding railway network, a dependable postal system, and more accessible transport by sea.²⁴

The growth in Irish children’s consumerism can be traced through late eighteenth-century newspaper advertisements targeted at parents of wealthy and literate backgrounds.²⁵ In the 1810s circuses visiting Ireland advertised special admission rates for children, and as Christmas became more commercialized, toyshops and manufacturers increasingly purchased advertisement space.²⁶ Consumerism grew consistently in the decades following the Famine; the 1853 “Great Exhibition of Dublin,” held two years after London’s “Great

23. See J.R.R. Adams, “Swine-Tax and Eat-Him-All-Magee: The Hedge Schools and Popular Education in Ireland,” in *Irish Popular Culture, 1650–1850*, ed. James S. Donnelly, Jr., and Kerby A. Miller (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 97–117; Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, “Fiction available to and written for cottagers and their children,” in *The Experience of Reading: Irish Historical Perspectives*, ed. Bernadette Cunningham and Máire Kennedy (Dublin: Rare Books Group of the Library Association of Ireland, 1999), 124–72; John Logan, “Book learning: the experience of reading in the national school, 1831–1900,” in *The Experience of Reading*, 173–91. See also Anne Markey, “Irish children’s fiction, 1727–1820,” *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies* 41:1 (Spring/Summer 2011), 115–33.

24. These factors also facilitated the growth of the provincial press in Ireland. See Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: the Irish Provincial Press, 1850–1892* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 21.

25. See Máire Kennedy, “Women and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” in *The Experience of Reading*, 82. An in-depth examination of nineteenth-century children’s consumer culture in Ireland is beyond the scope of this inquiry, but it is certainly a project meriting a separate study.

26. *Freeman’s Journal*, 2 Dec. 1816.

Exhibition” at the Crystal Palace, showcased Irish manufacture alongside that of Britain and Europe, representing a clear step toward the stimulation of Irish consumerism.²⁷ Simultaneous with this general growth came the synthesis of children’s culture and consumerism—with books, “drawing-room plays,” fashion, fêtes, bazaars, parties, puppet shows, pantomimes, and fancy dress balls assuming prominent roles in the lives of certain young people.²⁸ Some of these events were organized for charitable and fundraising purposes, others to entertain middle- and upper-class children.²⁹ As a result of its association with a wealthy readership, the *Irish Times*, established in 1859, arguably offers more insight into children’s consumerism than its competitors.³⁰ One report in that newspaper reveals that by the late 1860s, the category of “minor works of fiction and children’s books” was second only to “religious books and pamphlets” in terms of quantities being published.³¹

The growth in children’s literary culture, as a subset of children’s consumerism, is also well documented in several nineteenth-century biographies written by upper- and middle-class Irish authors. Referring to their childhoods, these biographers mention the steady arrival of new children’s books and their delight upon receiving such works. W.B. Yeats, for instance, refers to reading *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* during his youth spent in Sligo.³² Elizabeth Burke (later Lady Fingall), who grew up in County Galway in the 1860s and 1870s, recalls her mother reading to her and her sister from Charles Dickens—and of

27. See *The Exhibition of Art-Industry in Dublin, 1853* (Dublin: Virtue & Co., 1853); *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 March 1853; Stephanie Rains, *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin 1850–1916* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010).

28. For a reference to “drawing-room plays,” see *The Nation*, 3 Aug. 1878; fêtes and bazaars, *Irish Times*, 26 April 1871; parties, *Irish Times*, 16 Dec. 1874, *Weekly Irish Times*, 9 Feb. 1884; puppet shows, *Irish Times*, 29 Dec. 1861; pantomimes, *Freeman’s Journal*, 29 Dec. 1858. Children’s fancy dress balls became fashionable in the 1880s and 1890s. See *Irish Times*, 13 Jan. 1882; *The Nation*, 24 May 1890.

29. See *Irish Times*, 20 Jan. 1874.

30. For more information on the history of the *Irish Times*, see Mark O’Brien, *The Irish Times: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2008).

31. See *Irish Times*, 11 Jan. 1868.

32. Yeats also provides an account of his time spent in England and his youthful excitement on Wednesday afternoons when boys’ papers were distributed. See William Butler Yeats, *Reveries over childhood and youth* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1915), 85–86.

her father grilling them on this work, such was his love of it.³³ In *The Farm by Lough Gur*, dealing with the same period, Mary Carbery refers to an upper-middle-class childhood in County Limerick when contemporary British and American children's books—from *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) to *Little Women* (1868–69)—were readily available and sent via Dublin.³⁴

Addressing more economically privileged classes alone, however, creates a distorted impression of children's literary culture. Most young people lived far less privileged lives, with Irish-speaking children in rural areas ranking among the most deprived. Although they were well exposed to an oral literary culture, Irish-speaking children rarely engaged with print literature; most could not read in their own language since the national school system seldom catered for the use of Irish in the classroom.³⁵ And even if they had been literate in Irish, there was little for these children to read. The first step toward the creation of an Irish-language children's print literature occurred only in 1900, with the publication of a basic illustrated alphabet entitled *Aibhítir na Gaedhilge*, and a collection of short stories for children entitled *Sgéilíní*.³⁶ Additionally, several early twentieth-century writers noted that although Irish-speaking children learned to read English textbooks during their schooldays, they usually were unable to decipher the meaning of what they were reading.³⁷ Moreover, most members of this class could not afford consumer products, literary or otherwise. As Máirín Nic Eoin notes in her study on representations of childhood in Irish-language autobiographies, “there are very few references to commercially produced toys” or to Christmas and

33. See Elizabeth Fingall, *Seventy Years Young: Memories of Elizabeth, Countess of Fingall* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991), 35. This book was first published in 1937.

34. Mary Carbery, *The Farm by Lough Gur: The Story of Mary Fogarty* (London: Catholic Book Club, 1938), 148, 172.

35. Séamas Ó Buachalla, “Educational Policy and the Role of the Irish Language from 1831 to 1981,” *European Journal of Education*, 19:1 (1984), 75–92.

36. See Norma Borthwick, *Aibhítir na Gaedhilge* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1900); Éadhmonn Ó hAlbainn, *Sgéilíní (Short Stories)* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1900).

37. An tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire, *Mo Scéal Féin* (Baile Átha Cliath: Cló Thal-bóid, 1999), 31–32. The first edition of *Mo Scéal Féin* was published in 1915. See Séamus Ó Grianna, *Nuair a bhí mé óg* (Baile Átha Cliath: Clólucht an Talbóidigh, 1942), 31–32.

birthday presents.³⁸ However, children's play culture—from traditional games to pranks—was very much a part of Irish-speaking children's lives.³⁹

YOUNG IRELAND AND YOUNG IRELAND

The Young Ireland movement would primarily look to and receive support from the growing, literate middle class—adults, and later children. Because the Irish language and Irish history were intentionally neglected within the national school curriculum, members of the Young Ireland movement, including Davis, Duffy, and Dillon, sought to promote both of these nationalist-imbued subjects outside of the educational system. Thus from its establishment in 1842, *The Nation* became a fundamental agent for the dissemination of popular Irish history and for foregrounding debate on the Irish language. As James Quinn notes, the Young Irishmen “believed that history should provide a clear and compelling narrative that explained the sufferings of the past, justified the struggles of the present and held out hope of deliverance in the future.”⁴⁰

This concern with promoting history as a motivational force for the future more than as an accurate account of the past also influenced the second generation of Young Irishmen, with Alexander Martin Sullivan (1830–84), who became proprietor and editor of *The Nation* in 1858, foremost among them. As the father of a young family, Sullivan was particularly concerned that Irish children be exposed to the heritage from which they had been severed; he desired “to do for our young people that which has been well done for the youth of England by numerous writers.”⁴¹ His first effort was *The*

38. Máirín Nic Eoin, “‘Lessons for Life’: The Representation of Adult-Child Relationships in Twentieth-Century Irish-Language Autobiographical Writing,” in *Children, Childhood, and Irish Society*, ed. Maria Luddy and James Smith (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming).

39. Ibid.

40. James Quinn, “Laying the Ghosts: Patrick Pearse and the Reproach of History,” in *The Life and Afterlife of P.H. Pearse: Pádraic Mac Piarais Saol agus Oidhreacht*, ed. Róisín Higgins and Regina Uí Chollatáin (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), 100.

41. A.M. Sullivan, *The Story of Ireland for Children* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1867), 6.

Story of Ireland for Children, published in August 1867, shortly after that year's Fenian Rising. Rather than offer a pessimistic account of constant defeats and oppression suffered by the Irish people, Sullivan aimed to rewrite the narrative of Irish history in "an entertaining and instructive" manner, altering its traditional vocabulary of loss and inspiring his young readers to heroism.⁴² This substantial history was endorsed by such leading literary figures as Speranza (Lady Wilde) and William Carleton; its several published editions testify to its popularity.⁴³ Like that of the British imperialists involved in producing reading material for children, Sullivan's ideology, as stated in his introduction, was clear:

In childhood or boyhood today, there rapidly approaches for them a to-morrow bringing manhood, with its cares, duties, responsibilities. When we who have preceded them shall have passed away forever, they will be the men on whom Ireland must depend. They will make her future. They will guide her destinies. They will guard her honour. They will defend her life.⁴⁴

To pursue further his ideological goals, in February 1875 Sullivan began to publish *Young Ireland: An Irish Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction*. This weekly children's magazine was priced at a penny and lasted for sixteen years as the only nationalist children's magazine in wide circulation.⁴⁵ Its masthead of a rising sun framed by young children being read to and young adults reading independently suggests that the target audience was children and "juveniles" of all ages—and that the publication aspired to facilitate their independence of thought, while providing a bright future for their generation.⁴⁶ Sul-

42. Ibid.

43. *The Nation*, 1 Oct. 1870.

44. Sullivan, *The Story of Ireland*, 7.

45. A fortnightly penny publication entitled *The Catholic Children's Magazine* appeared in Dublin from 1878 to 1881, claiming to be "bright with pictures and stories, and puzzles and pastimes of all kinds." See *Irish Monthly* (Jan. 1883), 58; Stephen J. Brown, "The Press in Ireland. Part II: Some Catholic Periodicals," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 25:99 (Sept. 1936), 436. I have been unable to locate any copies of this magazine to provide further analysis. As with many Irish children's books, copies have never been stored by the National Library of Ireland; it can therefore be extremely difficult to locate such publications.

46. The image of the rising sun, of course, became common during the fin de siècle period as the revivalist movement began to gain momentum. See Riona

livan did not hesitate to expound upon his aims; when engaging the popular Irish-American children's writer Captain Mayne Reid to pen adventure stories for *Young Ireland*, he insisted that he was "determined to provide Irish Boys and Girls with a Story-Magazine which shall not be surpassed in attraction by any of the foreign productions which it is designed to replace."⁴⁷ If *The Nation's* claims about its own publication figures for early 1875 can be trusted, its circulation and distribution were indeed much wider than that of its rival newspapers, a situation that facilitated the distribution of *Young Ireland*.⁴⁸ As Condon has pointed out, however, the format of this youth magazine differed little from that of its English rivals, an observation that tends to recur when considering the literary output of Irish nineteenth-century nationalism.⁴⁹

The Nation and *Young Ireland* were influenced by the political, social, and moral beliefs that Sullivan developed during his youth.⁵⁰ Although too young to participate in the establishment of the Young Ireland movement, he was actively involved in O'Connellite politics and Fr. Theobald Mathew's temperance movement by his teenage years.⁵¹ *Young Ireland* provided boys with nationalist adventure tales and heroic deeds from Cú Chulainn to Michael Dwyer (a member of the United Irishmen). Girls were provided with tales of strong-willed female "martyrs," from Joan of Arc to Mary Queen of Scots. Although many of *Young Ireland's* contributors used pseudonyms, it appears that young women contributed a substantial number of poems. Influential nationalists such as Charles Kickham published

Nic Congáil, *Úna Ní Fhaircheallaigh agus an Fhís Útóipeach Ghaelach* (Gaillimh: Arlen House, 2010), 18.

47. *Young Ireland*, 26 June 1875, 168; Captain Mayne Reid is also noted as a popular children's author in Mary Carbery, *The Farm by Lough Gur: The Story of Mary Fogarty*, 172. An Gúm, the Irish-language state publisher, produced an Irish-language version of Captain Mayne Reid's *The Boy Hunters of the Mississippi* in 1934. See Captain Mayne Reid, *Na Sealgairí Óga*, aistrithe ag Tomás Page (Baile Átha Cliath: An Gúm, 1934).

48. *The Nation*, 2 Jan. 1875.

49. Condon, "'Victoria's Own?'" 132.

50. *Ibid.*

51. See Patrick Maume, "Alexander Martin Sullivan," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 9, 149–51. A Dublin-based "Juvenile Repeal Club" existed during Sullivan's youth, but there is little evidence to suggest that this juvenile club was widely replicated. See *The Nation*, 8 Feb. 1845.

serial stories, while Sullivan's brother T.D. Sullivan, who took over as editor of *The Nation* and *Young Ireland* in 1876, published a serial entitled "The Story of England," which offered a less than heroic account of England's deeds.⁵²

Their national taste for robbery and murder went with the English by sea as well as on land. For a long period hardly a single ship left the shores of England that did not do a stroke of work in the way of piracy whenever an opportunity offered. Many of the "naval heroes" of Elizabeth's reign, whose exploits are so much boasted of, were mere sea-wolves, whose occupation was murder and plunder.⁵³

The Nation also noted and promoted the growing interest in the Irish language, regularly publishing accounts of the activities of the Dublin-based Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (est. 1877) and later of the Gaelic Union (est. 1880).⁵⁴ This interest filtered into *Young Ireland*, beginning with simple lessons on Irish place names and English-language poems such as "The Gaelic Tongue." Over time, these occasional references to the Irish language developed into a series of Irish-language grammar lessons and exercises, entitled "Éire Óg" ("Young Ireland"), with material provided by the Gaelic Union.⁵⁵ Indeed, the "Letter-box," in which the editor corresponded with young readers, was at times littered with Irish-language words as part of the vocabulary of young correspondents. Unlike some of the later children's columns in national newspapers, which published children's correspondence and other details relating, for example, to their location or gender, the "Letter-box" furnishes relatively little information about the actual readership of *Young Ireland*. One of the most important aspects of *Young Ireland* was the apprenticeship it offered to young writers, many of whom later became involved in nationalist children's culture. Through them the ideals and ideology of the Young Ireland movement were passed on to another generation.

The lifespan of *Young Ireland* coincided with the campaign for

52. *Young Ireland*, 24 July 1875, 208; *Young Ireland*, 13 Nov. 1875, 406.

53. *Young Ireland*, 13 Nov. 1875, 407.

54. See for example *The Nation*, 12 Feb. 1881; *The Nation*, 30 July 1881.

55. See *The Nation*, 8 Jan. 1881; *Young Ireland*, 14 Jan. 1882, 31; *Young Ireland*, 28 Jan. 1882, 63.

Irish land reform, and as a Home Rule MP for Louth from 1874, A.M. Sullivan was involved in the politics of that campaign. When the Land League was established in 1879, *The Nation* promoted its aims, publishing everything from branch reports to speeches delivered at its conventions. *The Nation* also tracked the development of Ireland's first public women's movement, the Ladies' Land League (established by Fanny Parnell in October 1880), as it spread from New York to many Irish parishes. Frances Sullivan, the American wife of A.M. Sullivan (both of whom were then based in London) became an active member of the Ladies' Land League, and her visit to Michael Davitt in Portland Prison in early 1881 was well documented in her brother-in-law's newspaper.⁵⁶ *The Nation's* early accounts of the Ladies' Land League drew attention to how its members were breaking down gender barriers—for example, through Anna Parnell's new role as a public speaker and Fanny Parnell's publication of a contemporary political poem.⁵⁷

THE CHILDREN'S LAND LEAGUE

Nationalist children, under their parents' and teachers' influence, became increasingly involved in the land agitation campaign during the summer of 1881. *The Nation* published several reports of incidents involving children from across the country. In Gweedore, Co. Donegal, for example, fourteen children aged from four to ten appeared at the petty sessions in May 1881, charged with assault for throwing stones at a bailiff; upon their release, *The Nation* reported that they were given buns and candies decorated with green ribbons.⁵⁸ Only weeks later in Millstreet, Co. Cork, five "young lads" were charged with a similar offense.⁵⁹ In the same county, the children of Kilkeel National School were roused to march through Bantry, "bearing green boughs and cheering repeatedly" in support of the secretary of the Land League.⁶⁰

56. *The Nation*, 19 Feb. 1881. Margaret Ward claims that T.D. Sullivan's wife was also one of the first members of the Ladies' Land League. See Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, 15.

57. *The Nation*, 15 Jan., 12 Feb. 1881.

58. *The Nation*, 21 May 1881.

59. *The Nation*, 9 July 1881.

60. *The Nation*, 16 July 1881.

The Ladies' Land League established the first branches of the Children's Land League in reaction to these and other incidents; these branches had the dual purpose of keeping children out of trouble while their mothers and fathers were involved in Land League activities and of instructing them in nationalist ideology and discourse. By October 1881, when the British government had imprisoned the male leaders in Kilmainham Jail in an effort to suppress the Land League, the Ladies' Land League took over its direction, and at least twenty branches of the Children's Land League sprang up over the following few months throughout Ireland as well as in New York, Liverpool, and Manchester.⁶¹ Information relating to the Children's Land League is scarce, much of it to be gleaned only from the Ladies' Land League subscription lists published in *The Nation*; it is evident, nonetheless, that branches functioned independently of each other and generally met once a week.⁶² During these meetings, children were taught Irish history and the Irish language and were kept abreast of the political situation. Michael Davitt, in prison when the Children's Land League was established, became a supporter of its weekly meetings, as they could ensure "that the next generation of Irishmen shall know something about their own country."⁶³ Children in the Kanturk, Co. Cork, branch of the Children's Land League, for example, studied the poems of Thomas Davis—an activity providing yet another link to *The Nation* and the Young Ireland movement, both of which Davis co-founded. Sectarian children's mnemonics for learning the alphabet, both imperialist and nationalist, were also common at this time; one such example was circulated within the Kanturk branch of the Children's Land League:

61. Reports published in *The Nation* in late 1881 and in 1882 reveal that branches of the Children's Land League were established in Clare, Cork, Carlow, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Kilkenny, Longford, Meath, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, and Wicklow.

62. In a recent essay Margot Gayle Backus focuses on representations of children during the Land War; however, she does not mention the existence of the Children's Land League. See Margot Gayle Backus, "'The Children of the Nation?': Representations of Poor Children in Mainstream Nationalist Journalism, 1882 and 1913," *Éire-Ireland* 44:1&2 (Spring/Summer 2009), 118–46.

63. D.B. Cashman, *The Life of Michael Davitt: Founder of the National Land League* (London: Cameron, Ferguson, & Co., 1882), 232. My thanks to Dr. Carla King for this reference.

A is the Army that covers the ground
 B is the buckshot we're getting all round
 C is the crowbar of cruellest fame
 D is our Davitt, a right glorious name
 E is the English, who've robbed us of bread,
 F is the famine they've left us instead [. . .]
 Y is "Young Ireland" spreading the light;
 Z is the zeal that will win the great fight.⁶⁴

As reports in *The Nation* make clear, the Catholic clergy held mixed views about the Children's Land League. In December 1881, local bishops urged the parents of Roscommon to withdraw their children from the movement on the grounds that untrained amateurs were providing "secular education" and "moral training" of children in these branches.⁶⁵ The views of another member of the clergy, Canon Henry Dennehy, parish priest of Kanturk, reached the English press when he denounced the establishment of the local branch of the Ladies' Land League.⁶⁶ He also denounced the recently formed children's branch from his pulpit, claiming that "children reared up in such an organisation would become like the 'Reds' of Paris, who had no religion and were never baptized."⁶⁷ As he reportedly "pledged himself to repress it," many of his parishioners walked out of the church in protest.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Archbishop Thomas Croke of Cashel endorsed the Children's Land League, stating, "I for one . . . desire to see it spread like a network over the length and breadth of the island."⁶⁹ These conflicting views suggest that members of the clergy were not entirely aware of what children were being taught in the branches, and that the Catholic church had yet to adopt an official policy concerning the involvement of children in political movements.

Certain branches of the Children's Land League were single-sex in keeping with the prescribed gender norms of the time, while others were mixed. Each was named after a leading figure within the Land League so as to acknowledge women's involvement alongside

64. Ibid.

65. *The Nation*, 24 Dec. 1881.

66. *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 10 Dec. 1881.

67. *The Nation*, 3 Dec. 1881.

68. Ibid.

69. *The Nation*, 10 Dec. 1881.

men's. The age profile of members also varied—from young children to those who were then termed “juvenile.” The John Dillon Juvenile Branch, No. 1, based in New York, and the Dublin-based John Dillon Juvenile Branch both had far more autonomy and political acumen than most other branches as a result of the higher age profile and concomitant independence of their members.⁷⁰

On several occasions the police attempted to disperse branches of the Children's Land League during their weekly meetings.⁷¹ The Miss Anna Parnell Branch in Brosna, Co. Kerry, catering for younger children, witnessed one such incident; in November 1881 a local constable arrived at a children's branch meeting with a government proclamation and attempted to disperse the group. A farcical scene reportedly ensued, with children openly defying the constable and chiding him with phrases such as “I am willing to go to Kilmainham with the rest.”⁷² When the meeting ended, the children marched defiantly through the village, cheering Anna Parnell and the Land League. Such acts of defiance became more common occurrences, and children's branches began to be included in mass public performances associated with the Land League, such as the procession organized by the Political Prisoners' Aid Societies in Dublin in August 1882.⁷³ Although the Children's Land League was relatively short-lived, for the first time in Irish history it provided a well-organized meeting space for young people outside of school, simultaneously immersing those children in the nationalist cause. The Ladies' Land League did not last either, but it fostered political and social engagement among women. Several of its members—including Mrs. Frances Sullivan, Rose Kavanagh, and Jennie Wyse Power—recognized the potential of structured children's organizations in which nationalist ideology could be disseminated. Working behind the scenes, such women became deeply involved in the development of nationalist children's culture over the following two decades. Sullivan served as president of the Southwark Junior Irish Literary Club, Kavanagh as editor of the “Irish Fireside Club,” and Wyse Power later became actively involved in *Inghinidhe na hÉireann*.⁷⁴

70. *The Nation*, 17 June, 4 March 1882.

71. *Freeman's Journal*, 8 Dec. 1881.

72. *The Nation*, 26 Nov. 1881.

73. *The Nation*, 12 Aug. 1882.

74. See Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, 15.

THE SOUTHWARK JUNIOR IRISH LITERARY CLUB

Nationalists among the Irish diaspora, particularly those based in New York and in the largest British cities, were keen for their children to embrace their Irish heritage. As the Children's Land League emerged in Ireland, another influential nationalist children's organization gained ground among the diaspora. Founded in the autumn of 1881 by members of the Ladies' and Men's Land Leagues based in South London, the Junior Irish Literary Club of Southwark, closely connected with *The Nation* and the Sullivan family, catered to first- and second-generation young Irish emigrants. Its chief promoter Francis A. Fahy had moved from Galway to London as a young man and was eager to set up an Irish community to support his fellow emigrants.⁷⁵ Mrs. Frances Sullivan, then residing in London, served as president of this children's literary club until early 1885, and her husband A.M. Sullivan became an active supporter of its "patriotic work."⁷⁶ In a letter to the editor of *The Nation*, William H.K. Redmond—vice-president of the Southwark Club, Land Leaguer, contributor to *Young Ireland*, and soon to be MP for Wexford—claimed that this new children's club "has for its laudable object the diffusion of a sound knowledge of Irish history among those young Irish people who, by reason of living in England and other foreign countries, have but few opportunities of learning the glorious history of Ireland."⁷⁷ Redmond urged emigrant parents in London, rich and poor, to send children of all ages to weekly classes on Irish history and culture, in the belief that "the earlier children learn to love Ireland the more likely is Ireland to benefit from this love ultimately."⁷⁸ As one of his motivations for becoming involved in the Southwark Club, Redmond cited his own childhood experience of learning only English history in one of Ireland's leading Catholic schools. He claimed that he had remained ignorant of his own country's history until many years later when he chanced upon

75. See *The Nation*, 29 Dec. 1888; W.P. Ryan, *The Irish Literary Revival* (London: self-published, 1894), 11.

76. *The Nation*, 5 Nov. 1881; *The Nation*, 15 March 1884; *The Nation*, 14 March 1885.

77. *The Nation*, 5 Nov. 1881. See also *Young Ireland*, 7 Jan. 1882.

78. *The Nation*, 5 Nov. 1881.

John Mitchel's *The History of Ireland*; he did not want members of the next generation to be equally ignorant.⁷⁹

The aims of the Southwark Club, not entirely different from those of the Gaelic League established a decade later, were clarified in an 1884 article published in *The Nation*:

- (a) to induce Irish youth to study the ancient language of Ireland; to make themselves acquainted with her history, her literature and her music.
- (b) to urge and assist the publication of works upon these subjects suited to youthful readers.⁸⁰

These aims were pioneering, particularly in regard to the Irish language and the club's commitment to the publication of suitable material for children; the organization quickly set out to achieve its objectives. Irish was taught at weekly children's meetings of the Southwark Club, and the *Southern Star* newspaper boasted that "many of these tots soon spoke Gaelic as purely as the bogtrotters of Irish Conamara."⁸¹ On the Southwark Club's schedule, occasional Gaelic nights competed with lectures on every aspect of Irish culture. These events were all imbued with nationalism. The children performed Thomas Davis's songs at their concerts, for example, and as the adult organizers were involved in politics and cultural affairs, several high-profile nationalist figures attended meetings and addressed the children.⁸² Fahy became deeply involved in providing Irish-oriented reading material for young people attending the weekly classes. Not only did he arrange for cheap nationalist literature to be delivered from Ireland to the Southwark Club, but he also published two children's books to meet their needs: *The Child's Irish Song Book* (ca. 1881) and *The Child's Irish History in Rhyme* (ca. 1884).⁸³ Fahy also contributed to *Young Ireland*, which was available to the children of the club.⁸⁴

79. Ibid., 15 March 1884. See also John Mitchel, *The History of Ireland: From the Treaty of Limerick to the Present Time* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1869).

80. *The Nation*, 26 Jan. 1884.

81. *Southern Star*, 26 May 1894.

82. *The Nation*, 17 June 1882.

83. See Paul Rouse, "Francis Arthur Fahy," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 3, 691. I have been unable to locate copies of the two books that Fahy wrote for children.

84. See *The Nation*, 29 Dec. 1888.

The Southwark Club fostered the patriotism of young emigrants and mobilized them to work for Ireland's cause. A.M. Sullivan recognized and expounded upon the potency of such emigrant support during a guest lecture delivered to the children in May 1884. Entitled "The Emigrants of Ireland," his lecture emphasized the potential role of emigrants in Irish affairs. Through the example of the Flight of the Earls in 1607 (although avoiding that exact phrase owing to its negative connotations of cowardice and defeat), he promoted Irish emigrants as "companions to kings" and "commanders in the armies of Continental Europe."⁸⁵ Needless to say, such propaganda contrasted greatly with the plight of most Irish emigrants, but Sullivan's optimistic nationalist rhetoric reportedly delighted his young audience, offering them pride of place within the unfolding Irish historical narrative he offered them:

My faith is strong and my convictions invincible that from the fidelity, the self-sacrifice and the devotion of that emigrant Ireland beyond the Irish shore, as well as of that of our country men at home, will come the resurrection of that beloved isle.⁸⁶

Although the Southwark Club served a relatively small number of children between sixty and eighty at any given time, its influence spread to other areas of London, Cumbria, and Dromore, Co. Tyrone, where Junior Irish Literary Clubs on the same model were established over the following few years.⁸⁷ By 1885 newspaper references to the Southwark Club began to dwindle, while references to its adult equivalent, the Southwark Irish Literary Club, increased. This adult organization, established in January 1883 after the initial success of the children's club, was structured similarly to its predecessor. With its motto of "Sgar an Solus" ("Spread the Light"), it anticipated the enthusiasm that the Gaelic League would foster on a much larger scale over a decade later.⁸⁸ Clare Hutton notes that significant literary, political, and feminist figures—including Speranza, Charles Gavan Duffy, and Sophie Bryant—participated in events or-

85. *The Nation*, 17 May 1884.

86. *Ibid.*

87. See *The Nation*, 11 March 1882; *The Nation*, 12 Jan. 1884; *The Nation*, 26 April 1884; *The Nation*, 27 Sept. 1884.

88. See Ryan, *The Irish Literary Revival*, 16.

ganized by the Southwark Irish Literary Club. Those most directly involved, such as Fahy, D.P. Moran, and W.P. Ryan, were “educated lower middle-class Catholics who had been drawn together by the experience of emigration, similar cultural backgrounds and a commitment to the political and cultural nationalism of the Young Ireland School.”⁸⁹ The influence of the Southwark Club was extensive, for leading members were to play important roles within the Gaelic League and in the revivalist movement as a whole.⁹⁰ In addition, the adult club paved the way for the London Irish Literary Society, established in 1892 and presided over by Charles Gavan Duffy; according to his Southwark Club contemporary W.P. Ryan, Duffy “came prominently before a new generation as the historian of Davis and Young Ireland.”⁹¹ Members of the Southwark Club did not forget its origins, and several continued a junior-club tradition by contributing poems and articles to *Young Ireland*.⁹²

THE IRISH FIRESIDE CLUB

The Irish Fireside Club, the most popular and most potent nineteenth-century Irish nationalist children’s forum, developed from *Young Ireland* and nationalist children’s organizations such as the Southwark Club. This club began as a children’s column in the *Irish Fireside* magazine that was founded in 1883 by Caroline Dwyer Gray, wife of the owner of the *Freeman’s Journal*.⁹³ A mother and enthusiast of children’s literature, Dwyer Gray had published *Simple Bible Stories*

89. Clare Hutton, “Joyce and the Institutions of Revivalism,” *Irish University Review* 33:1 (Spring/Summer 2003), 119.

90. For example, Francis M. Fahy went on to become president of the London branch of the Gaelic League. See Francis A. Fahy, *The Irish Language Movement* (London: The Gaelic League of London, ca. 1901).

91. See Ryan, *The Irish Literary Revival*, 8.

92. See, for example, works written by David J. O’Donoghue of the Southwark Club, mentioned in *Young Ireland*, 9 June 1888, 23, 28. W.B. Yeats also published poetry in *Young Ireland*. See *Young Ireland*, 23 June 1888, 52. Members of the Dublin-based Pan-Celtic Society (1888–91), which also followed Young Ireland ideals, contributed to *Young Ireland*. See *Young Ireland*, 9 June 1888, 24. Douglas Hyde also provided poems translated from Irish. See *Young Ireland*, 18 Aug. 1888, 184.

93. According to Felix M. Larkin, Caroline Dwyer Gray “effectively controlled” the *Freeman’s Journal* for the four years following her husband’s death in 1888. See Felix M. Larkin, “Mrs. Jellyby’s Daughter: Caroline Agnes Gray (1848–1927) and the

for *Very Little Children* in 1879.⁹⁴ P.J. Keawell, of the Southwark Irish Literary Club, wrote to her in 1886, commending the *Irish Fireside*'s special revivalist edition and claiming that it made him feel "as if we were going to have another 'Young Ireland' Literary Revival."⁹⁵ He further suggested that the *Irish Fireside* should publish Irish-oriented children's literature, and taking this proposal on board, Dwyer Gray recruited Rose Kavanagh, a former member of the Ladies' Land League and contributor to *Young Ireland*, as editor of the "Irish Fireside Club" in early 1887.⁹⁶

The continuity and interaction between those involved in promoting nationalist children's literature and culture is remarkable. Kavanagh, for example, merged the most successful features of *Young Ireland*, the Children's Land League, and the Southwark Club in her own Irish Fireside Club. By expanding *Young Ireland*'s "Letter-box," Kavanagh published correspondence between herself and many Irish children, and, as with the Children's Land League, branches of the Irish Fireside Club were established throughout Ireland and abroad. Kavanagh encouraged children to take responsibility for their own branches rather than depending on their parents to organize their activities. The Southwark Club's mission to include, influence, and mobilize young Irish emigrants proved much more successful when adopted by the Irish Fireside Club, with its transnational network of children's branches, linking the Irish diaspora from Australia to Argentina with children in urban and rural Ireland. The print circulation of the Irish Fireside Club increased through its move to the *Weekly Freeman* later in 1887, and some two years later it boasted over 25,000 members.⁹⁷ However, as this column became

Freeman's Journal," in *Librarians, poets and scholars: a Festschrift for Dónall Ó Luanaigh*, ed. Felix M. Larkin (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 122.

94. *The Nation*, 11 Jan. 1879.

95. *Irish Fireside*, 27 Feb. 1886, 160. In 1888, both Keawell and Kavanagh were to become involved in a new Dublin-based literary society called the Pan-Celtic Society. See J.B. Hughes, "The Pan-Celtic Society, 1888–1891," *Irish Monthly* (Jan. 1953), 15–20.

96. *Irish Fireside*, 27 Feb. 1886, 160. Kavanagh used the pen name of "Ruby" when writing serial stories for *Young Ireland*. See *Young Ireland*, 29 April 1882, 257–60.

97. See *Weekly Freeman*, 20 July 1889. The history and influence of the Irish Fireside Club on the Irish revivalist movement has been analyzed in detail in Nic Congáil, "Fiction, Amusement, Instruction," 91–117.

more popular, the demand for *Young Ireland* decreased, and the latter ceased publication in 1891 (when *The Nation* merged with the *Irish Catholic*).⁹⁸

Kavanagh's stint as editor of the Irish Fireside Club was short, and she was succeeded in 1889 by Hester Sigerson, who urged club members to learn about the ideals and literature of Young Ireland and initiated essays on subjects relating to the movement. Encouraging young participants to read and research the work of nationalist poets, the Fireside Debating Column hosted a debate entitled "Was Moore or Davis the Greatest Poet?" In one of her weekly addresses to the children, under her pseudonym of "Uncle Remus II," Sigerson promoted Thomas Davis for his formative role in articulating Irish national identity:

Speaking of the choice of books, our members should select "The Poems and Essays of Thomas Davis" with their very first prize order. There is no one book so useful for making good and wise Irishmen and women of those who study it, as this little volume. For Davis was pre-eminently wise and good and a true Irishman. . . . He was wise and far-seeing; he knew what we needed to make out nationhood. There is no movement today that Davis did not suggest and plead for: "Our National Language" is a passionate appeal that is perhaps bearing fruit in the Gaelic League of to-day. . . . Uncle Remus has often spoken to you of Davis, and will again—Davis' teachings are still the best for the youth of Ireland. Let our young minds feed on his prose and verse and it will be odd if they go far astray, later on, in a national sense.⁹⁹

The terminology and ideology of Davis and the Young Ireland movement, which Sigerson endorsed so enthusiastically as worthy of emulation, were echoed in subsequent enterprises of Irish Fireside Club members. The Éire Óg (Young Ireland) Branch of the club began its own publication entitled "The Irish Youth" in 1902.¹⁰⁰ Fireside

98. Loyal followers of *Young Ireland* switched their allegiance to the *Irish Emerald*, a weekly literary magazine, established in September 1891. See *Irish Emerald*, 10 Sept. 1892, 864. The *Irish Emerald* resembled its predecessor in its publication of historical fiction, poetry, and "Our Letter-Box," addressing correspondents' questions.

99. *Weekly Freeman*, 4 Oct. 1902.

100. *Weekly Freeman*, 11 Jan. 1902.

members William Rooney and Arthur Griffith became involved in the Young Ireland League (ca. 1893), which attempted to popularize Irish historical sites, and they also later established the *United Irishman*. The extent to which the Irish Fireside Club fostered and inspired children's political agency is reflected in a poem, "The IFC New Year," written to mark the turn of 1894 by a young member named Michael O'Grady from Kilkelly, Co. Mayo:

The brightest hope, O Erin dear, lies in that noble band
Of young and ardent warriors, raised to redeem the land;
As in the past, the glorious past, O famous I.F.C.
O shield of fifty thousand hearts, my thoughts still fly to thee,
Thy noble teachings to advance, is still my only pride,
To see enrolled, all Erin's youth, united side by side;
United 'neath the banner of our noble I.F.C.,
Inscribed on it our motto bold "We'll fight till Ireland's free."¹⁰¹

COMPETING CHILDREN'S COLUMNS

In October 1886, three months before the Irish Fireside Club established itself in print for the first time, the unionist *Weekly Irish Times* began to publish a children's column entitled "Our Young Folks" that lasted for a decade. The column had a similar structure to that of the Irish Fireside Club, yet its readership never soared to the same extent, and although its young followers proposed the establishment of affiliated children's clubs, these never materialized.¹⁰² Influenced by recent developments in English children's columns, "Our Young Folks" was particularly concerned with environmental conservation and animal welfare, setting up a "League of Kindness" to promote its ideals.¹⁰³ This column was more ideologically inclusive than its nationalist equivalent. On the one hand, it promoted aspects of British culture, including cricket, which appealed to a young unionist readership in northern towns such as Portadown and Dungannon. On the other hand, its editor, who chose the pseudonym of Kincora, the

101. *Weekly Freeman*, 27 Jan. 1894.

102. *Weekly Irish Times*, 4 May 1889.

103. Fred Milton (2006), *Taking the Pledge: A Study of Children's Nature Conservation Movements in Britain 1870–1914*, www.eh-resources.org/dbs.html (accessed on 10 August 2011).

title of Brian Boru's ninth-century residence, also endorsed aspects of Irish culture by holding essay competitions on topics such as "Irish Poets and Poetry" and "My Native Land."¹⁰⁴ As a consequence, some young nationalist members of the Irish Fireside Club were also active members of "Our Young Folks"; this overlap in membership, however, did not apply to children from unionist backgrounds in the nationalist organization.¹⁰⁵

"Our Young Folks" proved to be a popular column with many loyal correspondents until its abrupt demise in May 1897, occurring for no explicit reason at a time when children's newspaper columns were at their peak.¹⁰⁶ Almost three years later, in anticipation of Queen Victoria's visit, the *Weekly Irish Times* once more began to provide space for a children's column.¹⁰⁷ In mid-March 1900, "Granny's Column for Little People" emerged and was at first the antithesis of its more inclusive predecessor. Granny initiated her column by disseminating her loyalist views in articles such as "the Queen's childhood" and in discussions on the history and significance of the Union Jack.¹⁰⁸ Granny firmly believed in British supremacy, was a keen supporter of the British army's involvement in the Boer War, and depicted Ireland as a hellish place of "wild men."¹⁰⁹ Her ideological stance echoed the acute tensions between unionist and nationalist camps that were then vying for the children of Dublin; however, by September 1900, following the Queen's visit, she had softened her approach owing to lobbying on the part of her young readers. "My dear children," she wrote, "I see you are all fond of our dear native land, and this is only what I expected of you," and she proceeded to acknowledge the Irish language for the first time.¹¹⁰ Granny then began to promote aspects

104. *Weekly Irish Times*, 19 Jan., 1 June 1889.

105. For example, Thomas P. Keawell from Carrick-on-Suir was a regular prize-winner in both "Our Young Folks" and "Irish Fireside Club" columns in the year 1887. Several other names appear in both columns; however, it is difficult to establish whether they were in fact the same children, since addresses and ages were not always provided.

106. *Weekly Irish Times*, 22 May 1897.

107. In 1899, the *Weekly Irish Times* introduced a mundane children's column entitled "To Please Little People"; this was superseded by "Granny's Column for Little People." See *Weekly Irish Times*, 11 Nov. 1899.

108. *Weekly Irish Times*, 7 April 1900; *Weekly Irish Times*, 21 April 1900.

109. *Weekly Irish Times*, 17 March 1900.

110. *Weekly Irish Times*, 1 Sept. 1900.

of the Irish countryside and initiated essay competitions such as “My Native River.”¹¹¹ This shift in Granny’s attitude toward Ireland increased the popularity of her column, which lasted until 1943.

CONCLUSION

A small network of enthusiasts and activists, all linked to and promoted by *The Nation*, facilitated the evolution of nationalist children’s culture in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The fundamental goal of the first generation of activists was to redress the weaknesses of the Irish educational system. The Sullivan brothers approached this aim by publishing alternative Irish and British histories and *Young Ireland*, whereas those involved in the Children’s Land League and Southwark Junior Irish Literary Club established Irish history and Irish-language classes. These activists simultaneously attempted to inculcate nationalist ideology into Ireland’s children at home and abroad and to inspire them to act upon their nationalist beliefs. Their efforts culminated in the Irish Fireside Club, whose young members were independent enough to imitate the power structures of the adult nationalist movement. They established and administered their own clubs, libraries, debating societies, and publications and fundraised for charitable activities. The same young members of the Irish Fireside Club were to become the leading innovators and supporters of nationalist children’s culture throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Some became involved in establishing child-oriented organizations such as Inghinidhe na hÉireann; others wrote and illustrated the earliest Irish-language children’s books; and still others attempted to reform the educational system along nationalist lines.¹¹²

The success of the late nineteenth-century children’s organizations discussed in this essay inspired and paved the way for many new and diverse nationalist youth projects. These included Countess Markievicz and Bulmer Hobson’s *Fianna Éireann* (est. 1909), as well as Mi-

111. *Weekly Irish Times*, 29 Sept. 1900.

112. For example, Arthur Griffith and William Rooney were involved in the establishment of Inghinidhe na hÉireann in 1900; George Fagan and Mollie Killeen became involved in illustrating and writing the earliest Irish-language children’s books; and others members including Agnes O’Farrelly, Henry Morris, and George Moonan, became deeply involved in attempts to reform the educational system.

chael Mullen's *Coiste na bPáistí*, which arranged for the children of Dublin's trade unionists to visit the Connemara Gaeltacht during the 1930s.¹¹³ It was no coincidence that the visibility of women in the public sphere expanded concurrently with these organizations: new, socially acceptable roles for women as children's organizers and ideological instructors offered them an avenue into and justification for entering the male-dominated public sphere. The increasing prominence of children within public discourse during the four decades between 1861 and 1900 reflected a society in which traditional power structures, norms, and philosophies were being challenged by new educational, political, and market-driven ideologies. In twentieth-century Ireland, these affronts to tradition would continue to intensify.

113. See Marnie Hay, "The foundation and development of Na Fianna Éireann, 1909–16," *Irish Historical Studies* 36:141 (May 2008), 53–71.