UCDscholarcast

Series 1

The Art of Popular Culture: From 'The Meeting of the Waters' to *Riverdance*

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The Boy as National Hero: The Legacy of Cúchulainn

In November 2007 the Orange Order in Ireland unveiled a new brand identity with the intent of updating the image of the Order as a means of encouraging young people to learn its history and traditions. The Order commissioned a graphic designer to create a cartoon character who would provide a visual alternative to King Billy as representative of the Order.

Fig 1: Sash Gordon, *The Irish Times,* 27 Nov 2007

As you can see, he is very definitely not an Orangeman in the traditional mould– but is in fact a boy superhero with a sparkling smile, appealing quiff, orange collarette and suit with purple cloak. There's not a bowler hat or a Union Jack in sight; we can expect to see the Orange boy hero feature prominently in future Twelfth celebrations.

There are a number of interesting things at play here – not least the emergence of a transformed political landscape in which the Orange Order is actively keen to renegotiate its cultural position – but my interest for the purpose of this lecture is in the particular choice of the figure of the Boy - rather than an emblem, an animal, a logo or a even an adult man as a signifier for meaning.

Leaving Sash Gordon aside for the moment I would like to examine the ideological function and ubiquity of the image of the boy within Irish nationalist narratives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I am interested in the way in which the figure of the boy has acted, and perhaps continues to act, as a conduit for different kinds of meanings – sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory and often contains oppositional meanings within the one representation or image. I am interested in the use of the boy as metaphor within Revivalist culture and in particular the way in which the figure of Cúchulainn was mobilised by cultural nationalists, especially Pearse.

The promotion of heroic narratives of masculinity within Revival culture needs to be contextualised within dominating imperial discourses of gender which constructed understandings of Irishness and Irish national identity throughout the Victorian and Edwardian period. In addition an understanding of the ideological complexity of childhood within this period is crucial to any such debate on representation.

The association of Ireland with woman and with characteristics of femininity has been well established by scholars such as L.P Curtis, Lyn Innes, Belinda Loftus, and Elizabeth Butler Cullingford amongst others.[1] The feminisation of Ireland within the late nineteenth century owes much to the influence of Matthew Arnold whose *Study*

of Celtic Literature published in 1866 formed part of a discursive network of Victorian scholarship investigating questions of cultural identity through the disciplines of ethnography and linguistics. Arnold's argument that the quality of literature and culture produced by the Celtic races mirrored their best and worst features as a race sits quite easily alongside other nineteenth century discourses of social Darwinism which established the morality of subjects through their physical and racial attributes. L.P Curtis' study *Of Apes and Angels* documents how the iconographic treatment of the Irish and Irishness in popular nineteenth century print culture made explicit connections between Irishness, bestiality and blackness suggesting that the Irish were a less well developed race socially and morally.

The feminisation of Ireland is therefore double-edged; on the one hand the work of Arnold promotes the idea of the Irish as a sensitive artistic genius. This sits at odds with the proliferation of contemporary discourses on the culturally uncouth Irish as disseminated through the popular pages of *Punch* magazine for example. The fracturing that occurs between the civilising tendencies of the artistic, feminised Celt and the uncouth barbaric Irish is visually represented as a tension between the acquiescent and obliging Ireland (the female body of Hibernia) and the politically rebellious Ireland (the rough-hewn Fenian Gael). Therefore imperial representations of Ireland as female tended to focus on Ireland's weakness, beauty, youth and ineptitude and the need to be shielded from the sexually rapacious and troublesome Fenians in their Irish-American/Jacobite clothing. This is evident in the Punch cartoon *The Fenian Pest* of the late 1860s which depicts this fracturing of Irish identity along gendered lines.

Fig 2: The Fenian Pest, Punch, 1866

However, the imperial gendering of Ireland as obliging female is confused somewhat by the nationalist tradition of also representing Ireland as female; which, although reflecting a different set of political values, nevertheless draws on the same prevailing ideologies of femininity. The female image of nationalist Ireland is largely an image of dispossession, of disenfranchisement and of victimised oppression.

If however, the representation of femaleness is splintered, then the representation of maleness is equally so. Images such as the Fenian Pest depict Irish nationalist maleness as barely human occupying a barren, uncivilised landscape. Catherine Nash has suggested that Revivalist cultural politics self consciously promoted the west of Ireland as 'other' to the pastoral feminised topography of Englishness and the rugged body of Gaelic manhood as 'authentic' Irishness.[2] Indeed we continue to carry this perception of the west of Ireland as the 'real' Ireland as evidenced by a series of recent postcards published under that title. This recuperation of the primitive within was reinforced in Revivalist writing by the idea of the landscape as a source of personal and national regeneration and which privileged the elemental over the pastoral, the rural over the urban, the peasant over the factory worker, and the male over the female by suggesting that one state of being was more authentically Irish than the other.

Among the plethora of discourses on imperial representations of Ireland, Richard Haslam stands out for his attention to nineteenth century visual narratives which have depicted Ireland as a child.[3] He refers in particular to two images: John Tenniel both circa 1865-66.[4] in the first *Physic for Fenians* a paternalistic doctor dispenses his hard-won advice and in the second *Erin's Little Difficulty* disobedient Ireland is being beaten by his exasperated mother. In fact a closer look reveals the child not to be a boy as much as a stunted man and the images can therefore be read within the prevailing frame of discourses which simultaneously construct the political ineffectiveness of Irish self-government (and female suffrage) and the brutalising forces of nationalism.

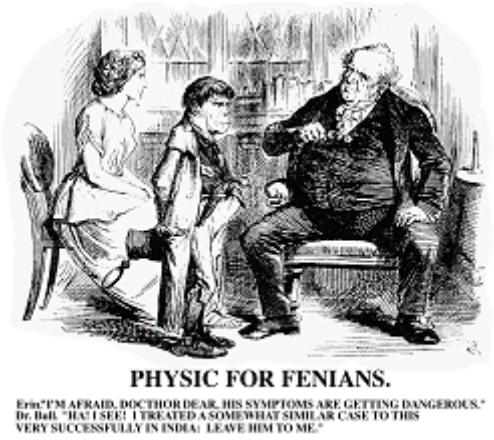

Fig 3: Physic for Fenians, Punch, *8 December 1866*

Fig 4: Erin's Little Difficulty, Punch, *30 Sept 1865*

While the infantilising of the Irish was not uncommon within travel narratives and writings in the nineteenth century the visual depiction of the Irish as actual children (rather than miniaturised versions of adults) was unusual.

The Victorian sentimentalisation of childhood may be understood as a means of deflecting anxieties about the difficulties of modern adult living. Certainly the importance of representing childhood as a psychic state of "otherness" to adulthood has been a recognisable theme within cultural history since the Romantics. Peter Coveney has traced the relationship between the eighteenth century Romantic cult of feeling and the establishment of the child as a literary theme. Coveney argues that the late Victorian nostalgia for childhood was a means of withdrawing from spiritual and emotional confusion as the figure of the child was often presented as symbolic of moral and spiritual certitude[5]. Carolyn Steadman has suggested that representations of childhood in literary culture are interesting insofar as they are used to express the historicity of the present. Child figures, she argues, are used as ways of

reconfiguring the relationship between the past and the present by positing a continuum of interiority.[6]

The affective literary and visual power of the child is a commonly understood metaphor (or personification) of all people – individually in each remembered childhood – and collectively – the birth of the imagined community or nation state.

Declan Kiberd has argued that Romantic nationalism's preoccupation with the metaphor of childhood combines a nostalgia for the past with a longing for escape and, simultaneously, internalises imperial discourses which infantilise native cultures.[7] However, Steadman suggests that a lingering preoccupation with childhood is not always focused on nostalgia and may be a deeply ambiguous and contradictory statement about the present - given that the child is often both a symbol of loss and disintegration as well as progress and civilisation. Within Romantic nationalism the child figure or the *idea* of the child may be used, in Kiberd's sense, to recall and express a common past but it may also function as the promise of a story waiting to be told.

While Kiberd, Steadman and Coveney talk about the affective power of the child within Irish Romantic nationalism it is almost exclusively the figure of the boy-child which dominates. The privileging of the boy does not in itself suggest a bias against girls but points to both the recuperation of Irish heroic literature into popular culture and the increasing recognition amongst cultural nationalists of the pedagogical influence of popular imperial publications for boys.

The interest in Irish bardic literature (the stories of the Fianna and the Ulster Cycle) is easy to understand; firstly and most importantly Revivalists found in *The Táin*, the central story of the Ulster Cycle, a literary epic equivalent in content and pedigree to the Arthurian cycle - and to a lesser extent the Wagnerian *Ring* cycle. *The Táin* predates the Arthurian legends by several centuries and therefore upheld nationalist claims for the antiquity and authority of Irish culture.

Secondly, the heroism and physical grandeur of the men of Eirinn fitted well with late Victorian and Edwardian ideologies of masculinity; and thirdly it focused attention on the form and content of the Irish language as literature and poetry.

The liberation of Cúchulainn from the dusty pages of antiquarian sources into mainstream popular consciousness coincided with a recognition that the imaginative interests of Irish boys were being met by English comics and adventure stories. Given that such tales happened to promote particular allegiances to Empire, Revivalists were aware of the urgent need to create a nationalist children's literature. Prior to Standish O'Grady's publication in English of *Cúchulainn and his contemporaries; History of Ireland Volume II* in 1880, the stories of the Ulster Cycle had only been known to philologists and Irish language scholars. O'Grady's impact on the popular consciousness was immediate and at least six different editions of the stories of Cúchulainn appeared on the market between 1898 and 1907.[8]

Cúchulainn was a particularly attractive role model for boys because of the number of stories in the bardic tradition concerning his boyhood adventures. As a boy Setanta left home at seven years old to join the Boy Troops at Eamhain Macha and was famous for his prowess on the hurling fields of ancient Ireland. He earned his name Cú Chulainn when he killed Culann's watchdog and acted as Culann's protector until his hound could be replaced. Popularised stories of his boyhood and

adolescence drew attention to his accomplishments as an athlete, a skilled charioteer, and a fearless warrior. Tales of the boyhood of Fionn MacCumhaill and the Fianna were also published in popular editions at this time but for the purposes of this lecture I wish to concentrate on the figure of Cúchulainn. The status of Cúchulainn as *the* nationalist boy hero of the era has partly been established in hindsight. Much of Cúchulainn's dominance as a nationalist icon within contemporary culture comes from his association with Patrick Pearse.

Certainly it is almost impossible to talk about the legacy of Cúchulainn without taking into account the influence of Pearse who promoted Cúchulainn as the ideal male Irish citizen. Born the same year, 1879, that O'Grady published the first volume of his *History of Ireland* Pearse's childhood and adolescence was concurrent with the national imaginative awakening to the riches of Irish bardic culture. In 1898, at only 19, he published a series of three lectures on Cúchulainn and the Red Branch Cycle in which he extolled the figure of Cúchulainn as a role model for masculinity and the Gaelic ideal. By 1903 Pearse was editing the Gaelic League newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis* in which he was able to explore his ideas on cultural education. From 1905 onwards it became clear that there was a need to create a pedagogical forum for promoting the teaching of Irish language and culture to children and it was only a matter of time before the idea of a school took hold. In September 1908 Pearse took the helm as headmaster of St. Enda's School for Boys in Cullenswood, Ranelagh, later moving to the Hermitage in Rathfarnham in 1910.

St. Enda's boys were a regular fixture in Dublin's social and cultural life in the early years of the twentieth century and were considered, without exception, as emblematic of the potential of Irish manhood. The authority of the St. Enda's boys as an imaginative symbol for Ireland, past and present, is evident in the many ways in which St. Enda's was understood as a type of national spectacle. Between 1908 and 1912 the boys performed in seven different plays at the Abbey Theatre and numerous others in the school; they also acted in at least six open-air pageants of Irish history at St. Enda's, Jones' Road (now Croke Park) and feiseanna around the country.

From the outset Cúchulainn was an important part of everyday life at St. Enda's. The front hall in Cullenswood House was dominated by a fresco of the boy hero taking arms while around the mural was an inscription of Cúchulainn's famous choice between life and fame: "I care not though I live but one day and one night if only my name and deeds live after me."

Fig 5: Reproduction of Cuchulainn's motto, Pearse Museum, Rathfarnham

Teaching materials and copy books were illustrated with the figure of Cúchulainn and the students used a Cúchulainn primer for the Irish language. Pearse included a story from the Cúchulainn saga every day at morning assembly and Desmond Ryan, a past pupil, noted how the boys joked that Cúchulainn was actually an invisible member of staff.

The exploits of Cúchulainn and the ancient bardic tales of Gaelic Ireland provided Pearse with a model of learning, gallantry, heroism, bravery and artistic sensibility wrapped up within a concept of the Warrior Boy Poet. The appeal of Cúchulainn (and also of Fionn, Oisin, Ferdia amongst others) was that they combined the artistic sensibility of the Celtic (as understood within Arnoldian discourse) with the pagan physicality of the Gaelic (as promoted by cultural nationalists). Pearse uses the term "boy" to denote not merely a state of childhood but also a spiritually and emotionally charged state of being. The potent combination of ancient aristocracy and physical bravery and heroism provided a template for Pearse's vision of a contemporary nationalist figure: the revolutionary boy citizen.

The boy as revolutionary figure is a common trope throughout all of Pearse's plays and stories. In more than one of his plays the body of a young male – not quite adolescent –not quite child is the conduit for ideas on self-sacrifice and is himself the sacrifice. In *The King* for example, written in 1911, the central character referred to as Giolla na Naomh (the Saint's servant) mediates between two men – one a pagan king and one a Christian monk – in an attempt to determine who is the rightful heir of the kingdom.

Fig 6: Desmond Carney as Giolla na Naomh c 1911

The play ends with the body of the dead boy "the noblest jewel of the house" being carried out of the battlefield causing the king and the monk to reconcile their differences in a new democratic order. Having achieved and lost manhood (through death) Giolla na Naomh manages to combine promise and loss, past and future, Christian and pagan, boyhood and manhood.

An interest in boyhood as a training ground for patriotic citizenship cannot only be seen as a preoccupation of Pearse's. Others, such as Bulmer Hobson, watched with interest the work of Robert Baden-Powell in forming the Boy Scouts and then proceeded to replicate its internal structure with the foundation of the Fianna Eireann. It was however Pearse's awareness of the ideological weight of much juvenile imperial literature that motivated him (and others such as Eleanor Hull) to produce a nationalist children's literature. As a result, Irish home produced stories cleverly borrowed from the successful models of English popular culture by promoting mythological and heroic tales, historical adventure sagas, and school stories. Standish O'Grady and Padraic Colum both published contemporary adventure novels for boys: O'Grady's *The Chain of Gold: A Boy's Tale of Adventure* was first published in 1895 and Colum's *A Boy in Eirinn* (1913).

Equally as important as the narratives themselves were the illustrations and crucially an understanding of the pedagogical function of the visual in communicating ideas of masculinity, patriotism and Irish national identity in the depiction of boyhood heroes. Margaret Hutton's 1907 edition of *The Táin* was handsomely illustrated by Joseph Campbell and the boys of St. Enda's acknowledged to her that the pictures were an integral part of their understanding and enjoyment of the story.[9]

Fig 7: Joseph Campbell illustration in Margaret Hutton's translation of The Táin, *1907*

The visualisation of boyhood at St. Enda's is central to understanding how popular images can promote national and collective feelings. Tim Edensor in his work on national identity and popular culture outlines the ways in which vernacular, popular forms circulate ideas of national identity much more powerfully than is often credited. He critiques the elevation of high cultural forms (for example theatre and literature) as being considered as the primary and in some cases, only relevant forms in articulating emergent national identities. While high cultural forms may be the most influential in determining national cultural canons, Edensor suggests that these high cultural narratives are not necessarily the ways in which collectively held national feeling is either produced or disseminated.[10]

Given that the role of the GAA in the pre-revolutionary years was, and arguably still is, more powerful than the poetry of WB Yeats in galvanising and articulating a collective national identity, Edensor's argument for the influence of popular culture is very persuasive. I would suggest that the ideas of boyhood and revolutionary citizenship captured the popular imagination not solely through written texts (plays, children's literature) but most powerfully through the reproduction and dissemination of visual images or visual forms. These include illustrations, drawings, portraits, photographs, postcards, and commercially produced images of public pageants and displays.

A number of different images of the boys of St. Enda's were in circulation – mostly as photographic postcards – between 1908 and 1913. The images are not merely illustrative – that is to say that they do not merely denote a particular event but also have a connotative meaning which aligns the boys of St. Enda's and the boys of Eamhain Macha/ the figure of Cúchulainn within the same historical continuum.

Fig 8: Standish O'Grady The Coming of Fionn c. 1912

This image (Fig 8) probably dates from 1912 although there had been a pageant of Standish O'Grady's *On the Coming of Fionn* as early as June 1909; however it is likely that this photograph was taken on the grounds of St. Enda's when the school relocated to the Hermitage which would date it slightly later. The production of O'Grady's masque was described as so convincing that the audience suspended their disbelief and imagined themselves to be part of "heroic antiquity".[11]

The next image (Fig 9) connects to the previous photograph (Fig 6) of pupil Desmond Carney in the lead role of Pearse's *The King* in which he played the sacrificed Giolla na Naomh; it is the St. Enda's school motto which visually maps the body of an actual boy playing the part of a fictional boy on to the abstracted image/logo of a warrior boy.

The overlapping and layered meanings that are produced by viewing these types of images in conjunction with each other enabled the sentiment to be expressed by contemporary commentators that St. Enda's and the boys of the ancient bardic world were one and the same thing.

Fig 9: The St. Enda's Motto

Two other photographs are worth noting: the first is a 1909 studio portrait of a young boy, Frank Dowling, in the role of Cúchulainn which he had played in a public pageant, *The Boy Deeds of Cúchulainn,* adapted by Pearse. The second is a photographic portrait of Pearse taken around the same time.

Fig 10: Frank Dowling as Cuchulainn *c. 1909*

Fig 11: Patrick Pearse, c. 1910

The visual connection between the two images is striking. While it may not have been conscious, it is none the less significant.

How can we construct a methodology for understanding how such ideologically loaded images work and how can we contextualise them within what we already know? Gillian Rose, in her excellent book *Visual Methodologies*, has outlined how the visual image might be approached. She suggests that the first thing to acknowledge is that the image itself has its own power and contained set of meanings (and that it is not merely a picture which illustrates some aspect of a written text); that the social context of how the image is being viewed (in a classroom, in a museum, on a laptop, in a film) needs to be noted; that the material form the image takes is important (is it a photograph, a drawing, a film still, an illustration, or a reproduction of same – for example a photograph of a painting in a book); and that the spectator or viewer has his or her own sets of ideas which are brought – consciously or unconsciously – to a reading of the image.[12]

Rose recommends a critical methodology for analysing an image which addresses three significant considerations. She argues that the image contains three sites of meaning: the first is production; the second is context and the third is consumption. What does she mean by these? Well, the *Production* of the image draws attention to the material conditions in which the image was produced. For example knowing that

the technological limitations of photography at the turn of the century preclude the notion of a snapshot or instant image means that all photographs of this period are staged. Poses were deliberately held for reasons of exposure speed and in fact owe more to the compositional conventions of painting than what we might think of as social documentary.

Taking *Context* as a category of enquiry involves asking questions about the meanings produced by and around the image; what genre does the image fall under: landscape painting, scientific illustration and so on; how is characteristic of its genre; what agendas does the image promote? With relation to the context of the image itself certain compositional considerations come into play: what is being shown? What are the spatial relationships within the image? What is the use of colour or of light and shade? How is the image composed internally? Where is the viewer's eye drawn; what is vantage point of the image? Does it include text and why?

Questions of *Consumption* ask us to consider if the viewing conditions of the image have changed from when the image was first produced? Who is viewing the image now and where? Who were the original audience? Where and how would the image have been seen originally? How has it been circulated, stored and displayed? Is there more than one interpretation possible? What kind of different meanings might be produced by different audiences? How might these audiences and these meanings differ from each other?

So, to return to our images of boyhood: how can we read them? Certainly, if we apply Rose's three categories of production, context and consumption the images begin to open up. It is important to understand how unpacking the layers of meaning moves the images beyond being documents of historical events or portraits of real boys but examines how they were (and are) crucial in mapping ideas of modernity onto historical narratives. We need to be aware of the agendas and ideologies contained in modern frameworks of interpretation especially when we are talking about the representation of boys. It is too easy (or too lazy) to read images through contemporary frames of reference and therefore miss more nuanced, historicised readings.

Walter Benjamin has commented that the mapping of 'progress' depends on systematically inventing images of "archaic time" to identify what is historically new, while at the same time, emphasising its continuing and on-going links with an 'authentic' past.[13] Both Clifford Geertz and Partha Chatterjee have explored how the tension between the old and new, between tradition and modernity, is one which is felt in all embryonic nationalisms.[14] The tensions within nationalism between discourses of preservation and tradition, and discourses of modernisation inevitably produce dualities within debates on cultural and political identity.

The circulation and recirculation of images of Cúchulainn and the boys of ancient Ireland can be understood not merely to be a way of talking about the antiquity and value of Ireland's past but also as a means of envisaging the transformation of a current state of affairs.

What the figure of Cúchulainn provides is a narrative of continuity between the authentic past and revolutionary future (or between a photograph of a boy who is not merely dressed up as Cúchulainn but is lisible as Cúchulainn) and through whose body is promised the possibility of political change via the figure of Pearse.

So what is it that Cúchulainn represents now? If Cúchulainn provided comment on discrete but connected debates on masculinity, citizenship and adolescence prior to 1916, then the death of Pearse created much more constricted ideological readings of Cúchulainn well into the Free State. By the time Oliver Sheppard's pieta-like bronze of Cúchulainn was erected in the GPO in 1935, the identification of Pearse, Cúchulainn and sacrificial martyrdom within the public imagination was complete.

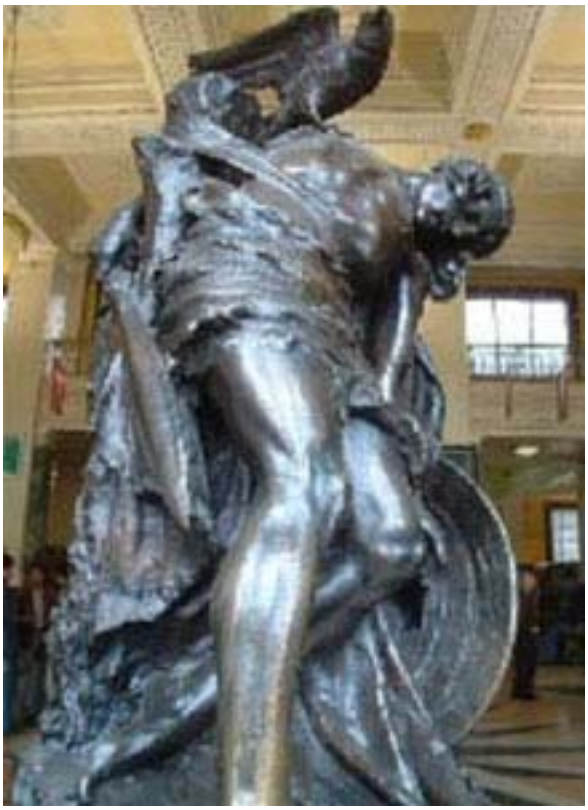

Fig 12: Oliver Sheppard The Death of Cúchulainn*, GPO, Dublin*

Indeed so powerful was the association that Sighle Breathnach Lynch suggests DeValera stole a march on his political rivals by unveiling the Sheppard Cúchulainn a year before the twentieth anniversary of the Rising and consequently availed of the association between himself, Cúchulainn and Pearse in a carefully constructed republican continuum.[15]

What is of interest however is the way in which post-revolutionary representations do not feature Cúchulainn as a boy but as a dead adult hero. John Turpin has noted the proliferation of medals, trophies and official insignia which appropriated Sheppard's image of the dying Cúchulainn within the material culture of the early Free State.[16]

Fig 13: Military medal featuring Oliver Sheppard Death of Cúchulainn

There were re-presentations of the Cúchulainn story in the 1920s and 1930s which contextualised the heroic element of the tale within the narratives of European high culture. Terence Gray wrote and designed an unperformed play, *Cúchulainn the Epic Drama of the Gael* for his Cambridge Festival Theatre in 1926 with innovative modular modern staging which owes much to Wagner's stage designer Adolphe Appia.

Fig 14: Terence Gray, Designs for Cúchulainn: The Epic Drama of the Gael*. 1926*

The stage designs, seen here as a model box with maquettes, draw attention to the appeal of Cúchulainn as modernist hero. The influence of Wagner can also be found in the operatic compositions of William Crofton who wrote two Cúchulainn operas based on the structure of the *Ring* cycle in 1930.

The residual echo of Cúchulainn today is heard not through high culture but through forms of popular and material culture. Setanta lives on as a byword for sporting excellence notably in the naming of the sports channel Setanta Sports. Through internet shopping it is possible to buy Cúchulainn material culture; from a miniature figure to a set of decorative porcelain Cúchulainn horns to a special edition Claddagh pocket-watch **(**which intriguingly manages to historically and geographically relocate Cúchulainn within the Galway based, nineteenth century tradition of the Claddagh).

Fig 15: Chuchaliann (sic) Miniature, 2008

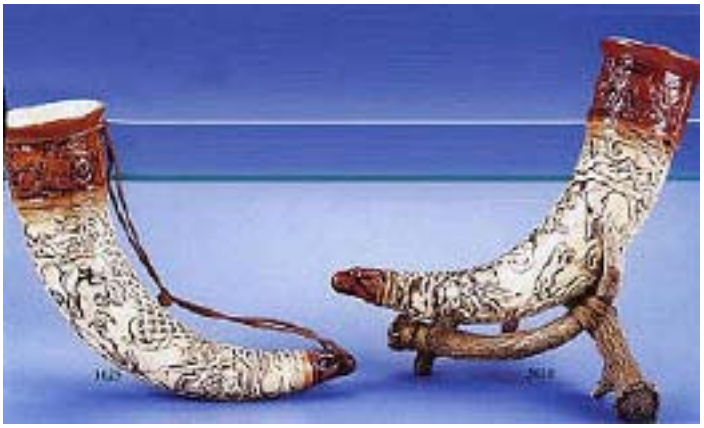

Fig 16: Cúchulainn Porcelain Horns, 2008

Fig 17: Cuchulainn Claddagh Pocket Watch, 2008

My current favourite residual trace of Cúchulainn is the *Cúchulainn School of Motoring* where presumably your charioteering skills can be perfected.

Fig 18: Cúchulainn School of Motoring, 2008

I have argued elsewhere that one of the reasons for the disappearance of the boy from nationalist imagery after 1916 owed much to a mood which fused religious orthodoxy and martyrdom in the figure of the grieving mother. [17] The image of the boy had functioned most powerfully as a pre-revolutionary figure: a sort of citizen-in-waiting who was an optimistic representation of revolution and progress. In the divisive climate of the post-1916 years it is possible that the boy no longer represented a shared ideal of citizenship given that political allegiances were themselves being contested. Who owned the boy-child? Whose legacy was he representing?

It is of interest then that the most public reappearance of Cúchulainn as a politically charged symbol in recent years was in a 1994 UDA mural in Belfast.

Fig 19: UDA/Cúchulainn Mural, Belfast 1994

The familiar trope of Cúchulainn as martyr fashioned on the iconic Oliver Sheppard statue repositioned Cúchulainn within a different set of meanings. Taking Rose's taxonomy of production, context and consumption as a means of analysing a visual text; it is evident that Cúchulainn's reappearance both appropriates and challenges traditional nationalist readings. Cúchulainn's birthplace is Ulster not Ireland; his martyrdom comes from allegiance to place not nationalist orthodoxy; and the Union Jack claims him as part of the chivalric mode of Arthur or Gawain. Publicly visible and publicly owned the mural re-presents Cúchulainn to a different audience and a different set of interpretations. In his Situationist manifesto *The Society of the Spectacle* Guy DeBord argued how texts may change meanings in different political or economic contexts. He refers to two modes of appropriation: the first is 'Recuperation' (where one image is taken from one context to another but carries some of its original meanings) and the second is 'Detournement' where an image is repositioned so that its new meaning may be completely oppositional to its original context.[18]

Despite the best efforts of the UDA the image of Cúchulainn did not catch on as a newly hatched Loyalist emblem. And so, in conclusion, I am brought back to the image of Sash Gordon – the new face of Loyalism in 2008. If we were wondering what had happened to the boy as hero then the appearance of Sash gives pause for reflection. He is stripped of any local or historical meaning; his graphic rendering places him firmly within American popular culture: he is a boy without a past but one who anticipates the possibility of a cleaner brighter future. Most interestingly though, he is an ideological image created with its commercial possibilities in mind. An Orange Order spokesman, David Hume, said they had commissioned research to produce a image which could be commercially merchandised.[19] The simplicity of the image means that it can easily be reproduced: t-shirts, mugs, baseball caps, cards, posters: it can be bought and it can be bought into. So, perhaps we can consider Sash as the current incarnation of the Irish boy hero: despite his political allegiances he can be seen as part of the continuum of Cúchulainn and Fionn which allies boyhood to ideology – albeit with a decidedly twenty-first century commercial twist.

NOTES

[1] L.P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1971); C.L. Innes *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society 1880-1935* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993). Belinda Loftus *Mirrors:William III and Mother Ireland* (Dundrum Co. Down: Picture Press, 1990); Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, 'Thinking of Her… as…Ireland: Yeats, Pearse and Heaney', Textual Practice 4.1 (1990): 1-21.

[2] Catherine Nash,'Embodying the Nation: The West of Ireland Landscape and Irish National Identity' in Cronin, Michael and Barbara O'Connor (eds.) *Tourism and Ireland: A Critical Analysis*. (Cork: Cork UP, 1994) 86-112.

[3] Richard Haslam 'A Race Bashed in the Face: Imagining Ireland as a Damaged Child', *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 4.1 (1990) www.jouvert.com.

[4] Sir John Tenniel 'Erin's Little Difficulty' *Punch* (30 September 1865) and 'Physic for Fenians' *Punch* (8 December 1866).

[5] Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Socity: A Study of the Theme in English Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

[6] Carolyn Steadman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority 1780-1930* (London: Virago, 1995) 10-12.

[7] Declan Kiberd *Inventing Ireland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995) 104.

[8] Eleanor Hull *The Cúchulainn Saga* (1898); Lady Gregory *Cúchulainn of Muirtheme* (1902); Alfred Nutt *Cúchulainn: The Irish Achilles*; William Ridgeway *The First Shaping of the Cúchulainn Saga* (1905); Arthur Leahy, *The Sick Bed of Cúchulainn* (1906); Mary Hutton *The Táin* (1907). William Butler Yeats's *On Baile's Strand* , which is based on the death of Cúchulainn, was first performed in 1904.

[9] Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork, Cork UP, 2004) 93.

[10] Tim Edensor *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life (*London: Berg, 2002).

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