

# Irish Diaspora, Cultural Activism and Print Media in Transatlantic Contexts between Ireland and North America c. 1857-1887\*

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*Abstract:*

This paper examines ideas, concepts, and theories, in relation to the revival of the Irish language as a transatlantic venture c.1857-1887 focusing on print media and cultural organisations in the United States. The study of these forums in the context of the Irish language revival allows us to assess theories and methodologies relating to the media's role in a transatlantic context. It demonstrates the transcending of the Irish language across transnational borders, the creation of debate and discussion in a hybrid community public sphere, and the role print media, and media events, played in constructing this transatlantic and transnational community, highlighting that movements in the US and Ireland influenced one another in the context of ideology, methodology and organisation.

*Keywords:* Irish-America, Irish language, Print media, Revival ideology, Transnationalism

## *1. Introduction*

The large-scale Famine emigration to the United States to escape hardening living conditions, as well as previous emigration routes established with flaxseed ships and trade, meant that there was already an Irish presence

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in the US before the 19<sup>th</sup> century which increased largely in the latter half. Not only were the Irish population outsiders in terms of culture, religion, and ethnicity but many also still spoke Irish as their mother tongue. Census reports from Ireland at this time indicate a decrease of 407,963 Irish speakers between the years 1851-1861 (Central Statistics Office, 2018). Whilst this cannot be attributed to emigration alone, it does show that there was a vast drop in Irish speakers in Ireland. This was due to, and not limited to, the increase in English proficiency for economic and social advancement, the presence of English in the education system, and the overall decrease in everyday spoken Irish and many when emigrating to the US took the language with them. A study of Irish-American print media and cultural organisations formed in the latter half of the nineteenth century offers context on this minority ethnic group and how they functioned in their new public sphere. As Doorley accounts in his study on the New York newspaper the *Gaelic American* the “ethnic newspaper is a useful tool in reflecting the concerns of a particular minority group within a host society during a precise period in that group’s history” (2015, 63).

Similarly, in the study of cultural organisations with regard to the movement towards cultural identity and acceptance, we discover the type of people who joined these societies and how they took part in classes and events societies organised. An overview of the aims and objectives of the societies are also understood whilst analysing their methodology and ideology. This societal progression is the stepping stone for the understanding of the Irish diaspora in the US in terms of the creation of social groups and in turn it enhances previous scholarship regarding the formation of new community and linguistic groups in the US in the nineteenth century before such flourished back in Ireland, the “homeland”. As Wolf mentions, the Irish diaspora in the US at this time were far from “silent Irish-language communities” (2017, 125) and they began to organise themselves to use their voice in the context of a journalistic sphere to further the Irish language revival movement. Three objectives will be raised in the present paper, therefore, regarding this study. First, to highlight that the Irish-American print forums and cultural organisations understood the use, and the significance, of using the press in the language revival in order to reach a wider audience and to create debate and discussion in a hybrid community public sphere. Second, by analysing the use of the Irish language, print media, and the formation of cultural organisations in the US, similar methodologies and ideologies begin to emerge attesting to the language revival as a global movement and that other aspects of this movement such as linguistics, debate, organisation and emotion transcended geographical and imaginary boundaries and borders to create global and international links. Third, that through the analysis of key media events and subsequent sociolinguistic engagement presented in this article, we can study the role print media played in constructing a transnational and trans-

atlantic community which later shaped what happened in the homeland in the context of ideology, methodology and organisation.

## 2. *Revival of the Irish language in a transatlantic context*

The Irish diaspora in the US in the 19<sup>th</sup> century attests to the linguistic capabilities of the emigrant community in the context of the Irish language revival, in particular for their use of bilingual print media. Nilsen (1996, 254) gives some insight into the number of Irish speakers in the US at the time, especially those who settled on the East Coast and attributes to numbers such as these the fact that there was a large population of Irish language speakers in the US which contributed to a new public sphere in which societies and periodicals were established for the cultivation, and later revival, of the Irish language. This community was not only bilingual in nature but also had a hybrid identity which formed transatlantic links in the forum of print media, ideology, and cultural society formation in both the pre-revival and revival period (Uí Chollatáin 2015).

Many associate the Irish language revival with the establishment of *Conradh na Gaeilge* (The Gaelic League) in Dublin in 1893 since it was the work of this society which really elevated and promoted the Irish language in the public sphere in Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century as both a written and scholarly language with “a unique quality of its own” (Ó Tuama 1972, 109). However, there were various ways in which the culture was given a “unique quality” in this bilingual US society in the nineteenth century and two methods in particular, that of print media and cultural organisations. These synergies created the cultural context in which print media played a critical role in the development of Irish language revival ideology in Ireland by means of a transatlantic venture without boundaries. Similarly, a lot of the revival methods used in Ireland can be seen as echoes to that which were already carried out in the US. As Uí Chollatáin explains:

Faoin am ar cuireadh tús leis an phlé ar an chéad nuachtán Gaeilge do ghluaiseacht na hathbheochana in Éirinn in 1897, bhí irisí agus nuachtáin na Stát Aontaithe a bhí ag díriú ar phobal léitheoireachta Éireannach, fréamhaithe i síc an Ghaeil thar lear [...]. (2015, 302)<sup>1</sup>

The acknowledgement of the print media forum in a transatlantic context assesses the connection between these articles and the broader journalistic field in which they appeared, and examines the links between Irish and US societies as a result.

<sup>1</sup> By the time discussion began regarding the first Irish newspaper of the revival movement in Ireland in 1897, US journals and newspapers which were directed at an Irish reading public were rooted in the psyche of the Gael abroad [...] (Translation mine).

The methodology and use of Irish-American print media to develop Irish as both a literary and a print language was a parallel transatlantic movement to that in Ireland. Periodicals published there such as *Bolg an tSolair* (1795), *Ancient Ireland – A Weekly Magazine* (1835), *An Fíor-Éirionnach* (1862), *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* (1882) and *An Claidheamh Soluis* (1899) also printed Irish language material in a journalistic context. This provided a platform for Irish language print media and developed the language in journalistic writings. *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* and *An Claidheamh Soluis* published bilingual articles so the material would reach both English and Irish readers, which is similar to the methodology practised in Irish-American newspapers as they would often print notes and translations to the Irish language material in order to access a wider reading audience. The teaching of Irish by printing vocabulary in print media was also seen in journals and periodicals in Ireland such as *Dublin Penny Journal* (1831-1837), *The Citizen* (1839) and *The Nation* in Dublin but to name a few (Nic Pháidín 1998, 7), a method frequently used by Irish-American print media also. Other transatlantic connections in terms of print media are found in font choice and article subject matter. Print media on both sides of the Atlantic was used as a voice for the various US cultural societies promoting the Irish language. The Boston Philo-Celtic Society used the *Irish Echo* in Boston as a medium for society news and events and Michael Logan, a Galway born man who had emigrated to New York, established the newspaper *An Gaodhal* and used it to disseminate news about Ireland and to print Irish language lessons and minutes of the Philo-Celtic Societies, especially of that in Brooklyn, to his readers, for example<sup>2</sup>.

The symbiotic relationship between society and publication allowed those who could not attend, or who did not want to attend classes, to learn the language themselves in their own time. It also kept them informed of society meetings, minutes, aims, and objectives. It was this synergy that transnationally influenced the usage of print media by cultural organisations as a media forum for their subscribers, *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* and *Cumann Buan-Choimeádta na Gaeilge* / The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (SPIL) in Dublin, for example (Nilsen 1996, 268). Following the increase in public discussion and vernacular print media it was a natural progression that members of the new social and intellectual society would come together as a group to discuss ideas and similar interests. The movement evolved into Irish language societies and cultural organisations where members of the wider public could interact with one another with common interests and goals. The Philo-Celtic Societies in the US also had similar aims and objectives to the Irish language societies in Ireland. Their aim for the cultivation of the Irish language in the context of a revival ide-

<sup>2</sup> See also Uí Fhlannagáin (1990 e 2008), McMahon (2008).

ology corresponds to the printing of Irish language material by means of a journalistic forum on both sides of the Atlantic. Their use of print media as a vehicle for Irish language revival shows the transatlantic influence of ideas in the context of this bilingual print forum. The Boston Philo-Celtic Society was founded in 1873, 3 years before the foundation of SPIL in Ireland, and *An Gaodhal* began printing in 1881, a year before *Irisleabhar na Gae-dhilge*. This common usage of a bilingual print forum highlights also that the Irish-American press was more advanced in their understanding of the significance of the Irish column amongst the reading public (Uí Chollatáin 2014b; 2015, 303), a method later used in the revival movement in Ireland.

The transatlantic links between Ireland and the US echo concepts of transnational circuits and communities as established by Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer (2013). Transnational circuits are “sets of ties between people and organizations in which information and services are exchanged for the purpose of achieving a common goal” and transnational communities:

comprise dense and continuous sets of social and symbolic ties, characterized by a high degree of intimacy, emotional depth, moral obligation and social cohesion. Geographical proximity is no longer a necessary criterion for the existence of a community – there are “communities with propinquity”. (2013, 14)

The two concepts aid in the understanding and study of the Irish diaspora on both sides of the Atlantic and relate to the theory of imagined communities by Anderson (1983). The diaspora and organisations in Ireland and the US had similar goals to promote the cultivation of the language through publications and its teaching to preserve its antiquity and to promote its use as a national language. The “ties” they had with one another were their motivation to keep the language a living tongue, as seen in the US in particular, and to organise Irish language learners and enthusiasts together to aid in its advancement and survival. This is seen also in the experience of other diaspora communities emigrating to the US in the nineteenth century, the Czech immigrants, for example. At a time of brewing Czech nationalism within the Austro-Hungarian empire Czech emigrants had a similar experience to that of the Irish in the US; they understood the importance of recognising themselves as individuals in an immigrant country whilst creating a new hybrid identity, the responsibility to keep ties with their homeland, and the development of learning and teaching Czech studies to keep nationality alive amongst the Czech-American community (Garver 1993, 103-108). Geography held no boundaries for these emigrants, and the Irish-American community in particular developed both “social and symbolic” ties with one another in a transatlantic context (Faist, Fauser, Reisenauer 2013, 14).

### 2.1 *Irish Language print media*

The Irish speaking community began to print Irish language poems, stories, and manuscript material in Irish-American print media in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Current research indicates that the first Irish-language column was printed in the *Irish-American* newspaper in 1857 and their aim for the Gaelic Department was to “vindicate the beauty of the Irish tongue, its high culture in ages far remote, and the advanced civilization of the Irish people as compared with any European nation” (*Irish-American*, 25 July 1857). They also asked readers to send them copies of manuscripts, Irish songs, or Irish literature they had in their possession to their offices in order to print copies in the paper (*ibidem*). An article published before this also mentions the difficulty in procuring Gaelic font for publications and that the type they wanted to print was to be “the same as that adopted by the Irish Archaeological Society for their publications and it [had] been cast in a manner that reflects much credit on the eminent firm who whom the order was entrusted” (*Irish-American*, 18 July 1857). Similar aims to this are seen in the objectives of the Boston Philo-Celtic Society and the use of textbooks in their language lessons which they ensured were the same as those with SPIL in Ireland (*Irish-American*, 24 November 1877). From these examples two key thought-processes emerge: that the publications in Irish-American newspapers in the US were to be printed as similar as possible to those already read by the Irish language reading public in Ireland, and that the beginning of the Gaelic Department in the forum of print media was originally used for the cultivation and preservation of the Irish language and cultural material. This cultivation is similar to societies formed in Ireland at the same time whose primary aim was the protection of Irish language material, the Ossianic Society (1853) and the Archaeological Society (1840), for example. The Irish diaspora in the US were trying to maintain their history, culture, and sense of belonging, amongst readers which was a parallel aim of those at home at this time.

As the movement for the language revival progressed print media in the US evolved from using the forum to keep the Irish diaspora knowledgeable about their homeland and cultural heritage, to one of keeping the diaspora informed of affairs relating to themselves in the US. Quinlin attests to this in his study of Boston newspapers stating that “the foremost mission of Boston Irish newspapers in the nineteenth century was to speak on behalf of the Irish community, not simply about it” (2013, 85). Irish-American print media initially began using the Gaelic Department as a means to keep the Irish accustomed to their literary tradition but from the 1860s onwards there was a switch from the cultivation of the language to the teaching of the language in these Gaelic Departments. There was another development in the teaching of the language in the 1870s-1880s when print media forums began printing

reports from newly established Irish language classes and Philo-Celtic societies instead of solely focusing on the teaching of the language. During the years 1870s-1880s in particular when the Philo-Celtic societies, and other Irish language societies and classes, were gaining popularity there was a shift in the Gaelic Departments from the teaching of the Irish language back to the publication of Irish language poems etc. as before. The teaching was mostly dominated by the societies at this time which shows a change in focus regarding the organisation of societal structures and provides an insight on how the movement in the US presented itself (as an organisation of activism and as an individual group which no longer relied on the Gaelic Departments in print media to teach the language to readers). With societies providing classes and lectures it also highlights that the print media forums acted as a catalyst for the establishment of language classes in the US, and that eventually the societies began to evolve and structure themselves. The Irish language public now began to move towards an extension of the spoken language in the formation of diaspora networks by forming these classes and organisations.

As the years progressed the presence of debate and discussion was also an important stepping stone in the transatlantic revival movement and this aspect is seen especially in the Irish language revival in Ireland with newspapers such as *An Claidheamh Soluis* and *Fáinne an Lae*, for example (Nic Pháidín 1998; Uí Chollatáin 2004). The criticism of literature, and in particular the criticism of language teaching, is just as important as the act of revival itself. One of the aims of the Gaelic League was to extend the use of the spoken language in Ireland and, therefore, the presence of debate in Irish language print media before 1893 shows the intellectual context of the public sphere which spoke the language in the US. It shows another extension of the spoken language as the appearance of the Irish language in terms of discussion highlights the language's progression in this public sphere. This presence would later develop into the creation of a separate, yet shared, identity, community, and voice, which would influence the homeland in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

## *2.2 Irish language cultural organisations*

In the study of the Irish language communities in the US at this time Nilsen mentions that “the question of the Irish language in nineteenth-century New York [and in the US as a whole] cannot be dismissed by mere reference to a ‘language movement’ ” (1996, 274). Whilst this was by and large a “movement” for the revival of the language, there was also the foundation of a community forming, both in terms of a linguistic and an imagined community. Cultural organisations created in the US as early as the 1860s give an insight into the beginning of transatlantic connections arising from community groups formed by the Irish diaspora. The Ossianic Society, established

in Dublin in 1853, had a New York branch and a newspaper, the *Phoenix*, which frequently published articles about meetings and members relating to the parent society in Dublin. An article that highlights strong transatlantic interactions between these two branches discusses the support and aid given by New York to Ireland:

The N.Y. Ossianic Society can render important services to the cause of Gaelic literature, [...] Its labors are extremely light, being – at least for the present – confined to the admission of members and the transmission of their subscriptions to the parent Ossianic Society in Dublin. All the real work, in as far as regards literary production, is performed by the latter, while the object of the New York Society is but to give it pecuniary support. (*Phoenix*, 9 June 1860)

The connection between the two countries on both sides of the Atlantic in regard to the language revival is enhanced again with the formation of the New York branch of SPIL in 1878 and the transatlantic connection between the Brooklyn Philo-Celtic Society and SPIL in Dublin, when the Brooklyn society resolved to “affiliate with the Parent Society, in Dublin” (*Irish-American*, 9 March 1878). These examples attest to the building of international networks as part of the move towards subsequent cultural activism on a transnational basis and the formation of global links.

Further examples of Irish/US cultural activism in the context of cultural organisations are the articles published in Irish-American newspapers referring to societies formed in Ireland. An article in the *Irish-American* entitled “Cultivation of the Irish Language” talks of the beginning of the Society for the Promotion and Cultivation of the Irish Language. The newspaper publishes an address and the prospectus of the society, and with its formation in particular, the editor attests to parallel ideologies and aims of this society to those in the US, hoping that both movements will aid one another:

We are rejoiced to find that the necessity of association for the purpose of preserving and increasing the little knowledge of the ancient tongue of Ireland yet remaining among our people, had been at length recognized at home, and that a Society having in view this purpose, as its primary basis of organization, had been started in Dublin. – We give below their prospectus, and the address of the provisional committee to the people of Ireland, in the hope that their publication may lead to the initiation of a similar movement among our fellow countrymen here, where it is needed probably as much as on the other side of the ocean. We know that there are numbers of Irish scholars in New York and other large cities throughout the Union who would gladly lend to such an association the assistance of their talents and acquirements. (*Irish-American*, 28 August 1858)

The main cultural organisations for the promotion of the Irish language in the US were the Philo-Celtic Societies established in the 1870s. To the



*Irish World* Logan sent an article (“A Practical Suggestion”) about his wish to create classes for the teaching of the Irish language and for the paper to print lessons for their readers (*Irish World*, 25 May 1872). He wrote under the pen name of the “Gael”, which he would use later as the name for his Brooklyn newspaper, *An Gaodhal*. Logan followed out his wish and created an Irish language class in Our Lady of Victory School in Brooklyn in 1873. In another letter to the *Irish World* he explained that he was to provide classes to those who wanted to learn the language once a week and after some time he would start to “deliver lectures *in Irish*, on national topics, composed wholly of the words contained in the lessons previously learned [...]” (*Irish World*, 8 March 1873). This was the beginning of the establishment of the Philo-Celtic societies across the US which, in light of recent scholarship, has been said to be a stimulus for organisations in Ireland such as SPIL or the Gaelic League, for example. They provided entertainment such as lectures in both Irish and English and annual picnics for members alongside weekly lessons which promoted Logan’s vision for the language. The Boston society was founded in 1873 and the Brooklyn society in 1876 with many other branches forming in the 1880s. These were similar to branches formed across Ireland under the Gaelic League. They were regional, as were those in the US and they allowed for more interaction with both societal movements on opposite sides of the Atlantic due to the involvement of a wider audience.

### 3. *Print media’s role in a transatlantic context*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Irish language was often seen in print media in the form of language departments or letters to the editor. The newspapers and periodicals in the US created a public sphere in which the Irish language was read and debates and discussions formed. These publications proved necessary to mould and create a society that gave the Irish language a presence in print media and journalism, and later to shape important aspects of public discourse in the language (Uí Chollatáin 2004, 226; 2008, 21; 2014a, 32; 2016a, 177). This can be seen in the work of Nollaig Mac Congáil (2011) on the impact of Irish language columns in English medium newspapers on the wider public sphere and in the work of Aoife Whelan (2015) and the “Irish-Ireland” ideology in Irish language columns published in the *Irish Independent* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Readers often interacted with the paper offering advice on what to publish, praising the paper for their constant work in favour of the language. They also interacted with one another and criticised letters previously published in the paper surrounding the language. Criticism such as this is found in a letter written by “Milesian” to the *Irish-American* entitled “Our Native Tongue”. Sent from New York, the letter praises and criticises the newspaper.

The criticism in particular refers to an incorrect translation that had been printed previously alongside an Irish language poem in the paper's Gaelic Department. The *Irish-American* responded stating that "Milesian" was correct, that they had not adequately translated the last stanza of the song, and that it was not "as closely translated as it [was their] want" (*Irish-American*, 7 November 1857). The reasoning behind this was that they "were about to omit the said stanza altogether, for it is so manifestly inferior to its fellows, both in poetic merit and versification, that it seems either to have been corrupted or to have formed no part of the original song" (*ibidem*).

Whilst this shows the sociolinguistic impact of the paper's Gaelic Department, and the correspondence generated from it, it also demonstrates that the paper placed more emphasis on the reprinting of the manuscripts than editing and translating them. This correction in translation highlights the dual language discourse the paper portrayed and the fluency of its readers in both languages. Corrections such as those are also seen in the Brooklyn newspaper *An Gaodhal* (and Michael Logan, its editor, with the Irish scholar Thomas O'Neill Russell). Douglas Hyde, in his 1918 memoir, described O'Neill Russell as a man "with the most intense convictions [...] little things and great things bulked equally big before his eyes [...] and he expended his intense energy on the very smallest of them just as he might have done upon the very biggest" (MS SOD/4/X/1961). His description of Russell attests perfectly to his character in relation to the controversy with Logan. The debate was printed through the medium of Irish-American print media and related to Logan's improper use of grammar in *An Gaodhal*. The front page of *An Gaodhal* stated that the aim of the paper was "the preservation and cultivation of the Irish language and the autonomy of the Irish nation", and O'Neill Russell attacked Logan in the Irish-American press claiming that the Irish present in *An Gaodhal*, and on the front page in particular, was grammatically incorrect. The basis of O'Neill Russell's argument was that the genitive was to follow "chum" instead of the word being in the nominative as found in Logan's paper. This debate, which began in December 1882, was well documented in Irish-American newspapers at the time especially in the *Citizen* in Chicago, the *Irish-American*, and in *An Gaodhal*. O'Neill Russell was known for his extreme opinions on the language and Hyde mentioned in his memoir that O'Neill Russell stated that if the grammar was to be so incorrect in *An Gaodhal* it "would be better to see the Irish language dead than so profaned [and] far preferable would it be to have no Irish language at all" (*ibidem*). His opinion correlates to an editorial note printed in *An Gaodhal* on January 1887 when the editor, Logan, wrote that O'Neill Russell once "said that he *sat down* on the Gael because it printed *bad* Irish" (*An Gaodhal*, January 1887)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis in the original.

One of the outcomes of this controversy was the discussion and debate it created regarding orthographical and morphological issues of the Irish language at a time when the language was entering a period of transformation. Through the forum of print media, and through the medium of English, Irish language affairs were discussed and commented upon. As Uí Cholla-táin states, it was the instrument of English language periodicals and newspapers that helped Irish language revivalists:

[...] work alongside the Irish language community in order to ensure the replacement of a culture that had been displaced for centuries [...] creating an unlimited public sphere regardless of linguistic or other boundaries. [...] By crossing the boundaries of language, class, creed and writing genre through the passage for journalistic freedom, they allowed the Gaelic culture to “exist” and rejuvenate. (2010, 55-56)

Another example of the crossing of transatlantic and linguistic borders is Thomas O’Neill Russell involvement of Irish language scholars from Dublin in a similar grammatical question he created with Logan. O’Neill Russell sent an open letter to John Fleming, editor of the *Gaelic Journal*, in the *Irish-American* on January 14, 1888, regarding faults he found with expressions within Irish sermons printed in the *Gaelic Journal*. Previously appointed “corresponding member” to the Gaelic Union in 1882 for “being resident abroad, and the official representative of the society” in the US (*Irish-American*, 4 March 1882), O’Neill Russell began attacking the *Gaelic Journal* in the early 1880s for several grammatical points he found in the paper to be incorrect (several criticisms were responded to, and many were ignored). In 1888 Fleming decided that he could no longer be silent and responded to the open letter O’Neill Russell had sent to the *Irish-American*. He stated, amongst other things, that:

Mr. Russell is not an Irish scholar at all. In his life he has not written or spoken half a dozen consecutive sentences in Irish correctly. Nor is he improving. [...] Now I would ask Mr. Russell, should he not distrust the temper that made him fall out with so many friends at both sides of the Atlantic? At this side of the Ocean, our text-books are being corrupted, and even our catechisms. On our tomb-stones a barbarous Irish jargon is being cut ; and Mr. O’Neill Russell is silent. But when a preacher once or twice uses a grammatical expression, Mr. Russell fills a long column with *ungrammatical*, but euphonious quotations to show *the ignorant* that the preacher was not correct. (*Irish-American*, 5 May 1888)<sup>4</sup>

This response from Fleming highlights the negative impact dual language discourse could achieve “with so many friends at both sides of the Atlantic”

<sup>4</sup> See also *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* (28, 3, 1888); emphasis in the original.

(*ibidem*). O'Neill Russell was a founding member of the Gaelic League and his attack on Logan was just one of many he created in the Irish-American press regarding methods used for language revival in the US. His negativity, destruction of relationships, and verbal disapproval, would have associated the League with a negative image due to a founding member criticising rather than praising international Irish language revival efforts. By writing in the English language the articles would appeal to a wider audience and disseminate their ideologies further afield, but it also, however, allowed them to be harsh, critical, and often at times relentless in their discourse on the language and revival methodology which at times could have been detrimental to these international links.

#### 4. *Development of societal structures and political activism*

With the development of societal structure in the US at this time there was a shift in the reading public's focus from the spoken language to the organisational. Self-made structures such as this were seen in the *Irish-American* when articles published by various societies suggested the establishment of an Irish language convention in the early 1880s. An article entitled "A Convention Suggested" printed in the *Irish-American* on March 10, 1883, is an example of this. It was mentioned in the article that in a recent meeting of the Boston Philo Celtic Society a resolution passed where the members of the society "deem[ed] it advisable to suggest a union of all societies in this country instituted for the cultivation of the Irish language, for the purpose of carrying into effect the objects for which they were instituted" (*Irish-American*, 10 March 1883). All societies would elect representatives to go to this convention to "discuss ways and means whereby the movement could be advanced, and to effect a union for the better furtherance thereof" (*ibidem*). This demonstrates the moving away from the reliance of print media and the Gaelic Department forum to the creation of their own identity and formation within US society. The gathering of all Irish language societies in the US for this convention to advance the movement is an interesting contrast to the parallel cultural organisation structure in Ireland at the time. As the movement in the US was growing stronger with the establishment of more Irish language classes and Philo-Celtic societies in the 1880s, there was a breakdown of relationships in Ireland within the same time period, the spilt of SPIL, for example.

With the creation of new community and societal structures a sense of cultural nationalism and identity, not only amongst members, but also amongst the wider journalistic sphere, was established. The progression of these societal structures aided Irish language revivalists in Ireland in later years as the methods used in the US positively impacted those in Ireland. As Uí Chollatáin states, the periodicals and newspapers in the US were:

instrumental in the creation of a shared, transatlantic identity, "which brought new perspectives to the "language world" of Irish speakers" and that this endeavour

constituted a “preservation project”, for others it was viewed as the opportunity to reinstate a shared identity, which would “supplement rather than burden” changing notions of Irish language identity as affected by migratory flows. (2016b, 353)

Irish-American publications encouraged the formation of new societies in Ireland and appealed to their readers to support the cause and aid in the vision both societies and paper shared. The publication of the aims, minutes, and meetings of the societies allowed the Irish-American, American, and Irish readers, to follow the movement in Ireland and enabled them to encourage the process. The ideology of the journalistic field and audience in which the articles appeared is seen by those who sent letters appreciating the publication of such articles relating to the Irish language matters. This linked the Irish and US communities together with a shared outlook on the revival. For any language to grow and thrive speakers of said language must keep in contact with other speakers on a transatlantic and global basis, a concept introduced by Pádraig Pearse in 1906 in an article he wrote in *An Claidheamb Soluis*. He discussed the influence literature can have on others on a global scale and the importance of having Irish literature, and perhaps Irish language material, seen in publications and in writings abroad:

Irish Literature, if it is to live and grow, must get into contact on the one hand with its own past, and on the other with the mind of the contemporary Europe. It must draw the sap of its life from the soil of Ireland; but it must be open on every side to the free air of heaven. (Pearse 1906)

As Pearse attests to the importance of Irish literature on a global scale, the same is said for articles relating to the revival and the development of social consciousness. In the Irish-American public sphere of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a form of social consciousness and political activism began to emerge, not only regarding the antiquity, cultivation, and revival of the Irish language, but also relating to politics and its links with the language.

A key example of such political hinderance on the language movement is seen in an article in the *Irish-American* in 1878 entitled “The N. Y. Philo-Celtic Society: Public Meeting in Support of the Irish Language Revival”. Whilst in the US, Thomas O’Neill Russell gave a lecture to the New York Philo-Celtic Society on September 21 and the *Irish-American* published it. Although the lecture was for the purpose of the Irish language revival movement, as the title suggests, underlying tones of political and social consciousness were also expressed. O’Neill Russell stated that “emancipation failed; Fenianism failed; and if the present [language] movement is not persevered in, all hope for Ireland is lost”. He also mentioned how he had “impressed on his hearers the absolute necessity of preserving the Irish language, without which it will be utterly impossible to preserve Irish nationality. We are now, he said, playing our last card” (*Irish-American*, 21 September 1878). The empha-

sis on the necessity of the language movement succeeding in order to preserve Irish nationality also highlights an obstacle in the revival's progression in the US due to the presence of political action and consciousness. The language and autonomy of Ireland began to be seen as a parallel aspiration amongst Irish language revivalists in Irish-American print media. Articles also discussed the necessity of learning and speaking the language, not only for its revival, but also for the taking back of Ireland's freedom and for her separation from English rule in order to become a "complete" nation. The aims of revival figures in the US, spurred on by the prospect of an independent Ireland which depended on the revival of their national language was, as Leerssen states, a "node in the mycelium of intellectual and cultural developments [...] the celebration of the nation (defined in its language, history, and cultural character) [was] an inspiring ideal for artistic expression; and the instrumentalization of that expression in political consciousness-raising" (2013, 28).

Other examples of the connection between social and political consciousness in Irish-American print media at this time include a letter to the editor of the *Irish Echo* from Thomas O'Neill Russell in 1886 and the visit of Douglas Hyde to the New York Gaelic Society in 1891. O'Neill Russell's letter addressed the language movement and contained political echoes throughout. He stated that out of all the Irish nationalists present in the city of Chicago none had taken interest in the Irish language, whether they are familiar with it or not, and that "the native Irish parliament, will be bound to take some steps towards giving the Irish language national recognition" (*Irish Echo*, June 1886). Throughout the article he constantly referred to the responsibility of the Irish Parliament to acknowledge the language movement and establish Gaelic chairs in colleges throughout Ireland. Similarly in 1891, when Douglas Hyde visited the New York Gaelic Society on his return from a year of lecturing at the University of New Brunswick in Canada, he gave a lecture which was printed in *The Chicago Citizen* entitled "Mr. Douglas Hyde". The article reports that in his speech Hyde was:

[...] justly severe on the Irish parliamentarians for not having done something for the language, and for not taking even a little interest in it. Hardly one of them has open his mouth about anything connected with the language or his country for nearly half a score years. (*The Chicago Citizen*, 27 June 1891)

The sentiment Hyde portrays in 1891 echoes that of O'Neill Russell in 1886. Both share similar criticisms and ambitions for the language and its connection with politics, and mention the incumbent duty, or lack thereof, of the Parliamentarians in regard to the language movement and both also refer to the necessity of the Irish Parliament recognising the language and its revival. The relationship between language and politics is one which is represented often in language revival movements such as that in Poland in the

1800s as referred to by the Polish historian Joachim Lelewel. In his article published in the French *Journal de Rouen* and in the Polish émigré journal *Naród Polski*, Lelewel wrote that “the legitimacy of the Polish nation was based on two major criteria – language and the political consciousness of Polish society. Political consciousness [...] was the most important unique characteristic of Polish society” (Skurnowicz 1981, 96). This again highlights the international aspect of the Irish language revival as the linking of language, politics, and nation was also seen in other global movements.

##### 5. *Emotional attachment to the homeland and Romantic nationalism*

Emotional attachment to the homeland in the context of sociolinguistic engagement can be analysed through US print media across the 1880s in particular, especially with the split of SPIL in Dublin leading to the formation of the Gaelic Union in 1882. Examples expressing emotion such as hurt are found in articles and letters to the editor in the US press in the aftermath of the split. One includes an article in *An Gaodhal* entitled “The Dublin Societies” in which Logan comments:

For some time we have been publishing the reports and transactions of those societies [in Dublin]. In doing so we thought that there was only *one* society in Dublin, and consequently, we mixed things considerably as we do not desire to take sides in the differences which, apparently, exist there, we publish the annexed communications without comment except that we recommend them to close up their ranks and bury their differences for the good of the cause. (*An Gaodhal*, October 1882)

Another example is seen again in *An Gaodhal* in an editorial from 1886, most likely written by Logan, referring to the lack of any new publications from the Gaelic Journal in Dublin:

A large number of our Gaelic friends throughout the country write to us to express their regret at what they call the failure of the Dublin Gaelic Journal. [...] We do not look upon the Gaelic Journal as dead, it only sleeps, and we hope it will soon awake into renewed life and vigor. We question if there are many men in America, or outside of it, who have paid more in time and money to the Language and Home Rule movement than we have, yet we don't miss it. [...] Who is to supply this money except those who take an interest in the language. (*An Gaodhal*, June 1886)

The emotional attachment to the homeland in this case is highlighted through Logan's continued support to the Dublin Gaelic Journal in the wake of lack of funds available to the society for its continuation. He also acknowledges that the journal isn't alone in its struggles and that *An Gaodhal* had the same struggles with regard to finance and overall interest in the

journal's success by Irish language enthusiasts. This shows not only that the two journals suffer with similar hardships, but also that emotional attachment to one another in terms of empathy and understanding transcended transatlantic borders by means of print media. The forum was used to communicate and express emotion such as concern surrounding the current obstacles felt by both.

Another media event which evoked emotion and attachment to the homeland in this context is the discussion regarding the printing of Irish language material in either Roman or Gaelic font. Articles indicating annoyance and anger are seen in reports from the Boston Philo-Celtic Society in particular. Their report to the *Irish-American* in 1879 demonstrates the hurt they felt as a result of SPIL printing Irish language material in the Roman font as it:

would destroy all our prospects of ever having a genuine Irish literature, [...] the adoption by the Irish people of Roman letter as a type for the Irish language would be a slavish acknowledgment to our Saxon oppressors, [...] if they [SPIL in Dublin] should lose their national pride, and cartoon our language, by burlesquing it with Roman, or rather English type, it shall be our duty to treat them as Anglicised enemies of the Irish language, hardened into West Britons, by the contaminating atmosphere of Dublin Castle. (*Irish-American*, 22 February 1879)

The report is direct, strict, and relentless in character, which conveys the strong emotion of the Brooklyn society. It is clear that the society felt that if SPIL was to turn its back on one of the main characterises of the Irish language, a symbolic aspect of separation from the English language, they would be regressing rather than progressing with the revival movement. The political undertones also highlights the increased opinion that the language was fundamental to the nation's independence. In the context of transatlantic revival we see the combined nature of both nationalism and Romanticism which established itself in terms of "whose homelands?". The Irish diaspora in the US created a community whereby separate yet combined entities existed combining "dynamic progressivism and nostalgia for permeance" (Leerssen, 2013, 26).

Leerssen describes the connection between Romanticism and nationalism as being "usually seen as a situational one: the two arose simultaneously, concurrently, in one specific part of the world at one particular historical moment, and therefore unavoidably shared common features, interactions, and cross-currents" (2013, 10). This concept is found in articles highlighting emotions of longing and support for the homeland, as well sentimentality when reminiscing on how the Irish language was once supported and recognised as a scholarly tongue in Irish society.

In the February 1888 issue of the *Irish Echo*, a letter from "Eirionnach" entitled "Ireland's Distinctive Nationality Will be Lost of the Irish Language is



Not Preserved” was published having previously been published in the Dublin *The Nation* on 21 January of the same year. “Eirionnach” writes of nationalism and political freedom and mentions that it would have been a shame for Ireland to have “[...] lost our language, our faith, our morality, our old ideas, our traditions – everything that distinguishes Irishmen as a separate people [...]” (*Irish Echo*, February 1888). There are political connotations throughout the letter, but the Romanisation of Ireland also features in the way in which her traditions are expressed and described as something to be cherished, protected, and placed out of harm’s way. The romanticised version of Ireland also conveys the utopian vision Irish revivalists had for Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was particularly evident in the *fin de siècle* period of cultural nationality, as Bríona Nic Dhiarmada describes it: “the revival and restoration of the Irish language itself became an important part of the utopian project of cultural nationalism and can be read as a form of nostalgia in its earlier formulation – that of ‘a desire to go home’ ” (2007, 369)<sup>5</sup>. Also Crystal (2000, 41), in his study of language death, assesses that “the desire to know about our ancestry is a universal inclination – but it takes a language to satisfy it. And, once a language is lost, the links with our past are gone. We are, in effect, alone”. This contextualises why many articles in the Irish-American print media frequently referred to the connection between language, antiquity, and the importance of the language for the nation. The past and the desire to return to the past is often mentioned in print media at this time, it is what Leerssen (2013, 23) attributes to a “nation’s enduring identity” which, in this context, not only transcends time but also linguistic and geographical borders.

Between the years 1867 and 1877 alone there were roughly 55 articles printed in various Irish-American newspapers referring to the antiquity of the language, its importance as a Celtic tongue, and the necessity of the preservation and cultivation of Irish literature in order to aid the revival of the language. One letter to the editor in particular amplifies this. Entitled “Ireland’s Literary Fame Greater in Ancient than in Modern Times”, it was sent by Thomas Noonan and combines the usage of language “with the moral, intellectual, and emotional faculties of man” (*Irish World*, 22 March 1873). Noonan maintains that the melody and the syntax of the Irish language are a delight, and also that:

History abundantly testifies that in every department of science and literature, such as existed in those ages, the Irish-speaking literary stars of Erin shone as brilliantly in the intellectual firmament as their English-speaking ancestors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. “Whilst Greece and Rome were laid waste by the arms of barbarians, Ireland was improved by the institutions of its learned men”. (*Irish World*, 22 March 1873)

<sup>5</sup> See also Ó Conchubhair (2009) and Nic Congáil (2012).

The importance of Irish literature is compared to that from Greece and Rome which is often referred to as the most scholarly of all literature and writing. This echoes Leerssen's (2013, 27) concept of Romantic nationalism when all global languages can "raise claims to recognition in one form of another". Similarly, in lectures provided by the US societies, emphasis was placed on the Romanisation of Ireland in enthusiasts' quest to portray Ireland's antiquity. This is seen in a letter addressed to the president of the NY Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, written for the *Irish-American* in 1884 by Frederick F. L. O. Roehrig, Professor of Sanskrit and Living Asiatic Languages in Cornell University. The letter, printed in May, attested to the necessity of the cultivation and antiquity of the language, echoing the concept of Romantic nationalism once again in the way in which the language is seen as something to be cherished and protected, as an identifier of a distinct nationality, and as a key aspect of nationhood:

For in Ireland, the people will look up to their countrymen in America to see what they will do when wholly unrestrained and free. And this should be to teach them to love, to cultivate, to preserve and perpetuate their venerable mother-tongue, -so superior to the greatest number of the languages spoken all around them on European soil, for its antiquity, its originality, its unmixed purity, its remarkably pleasing euphony and easy, harmonious flow [...] its philosophical structure and wonderful literary susceptibility. (*Irish-American*, 17 May 1884)

The global movement for the validation of a nation was fundamental in her reviving the language, and the two were symbiotic in nature during the "dual development of the nations of Europe" (Skurnowicz 1981, 2).

## 6. Conclusion

Ó Dochartaigh (1979, 66) mentions that when the Gaelic League was founded in Dublin in 1893 the main aim of the society was to keep the speaking of the Irish language alive amongst the people of Ireland and that this was a completely new concept. However, as new research coming to the fore in recent years suggests, the role of the Philo-Celtic societies across the US in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in fact lay the foundation for the Gaelic League in Dublin as significant similarities between both language movements can be seen to have been already taking root in America 40 years previously. As Uí Cholla-táin (2015, 284) states some of the stepping stones of the Irish language revival were laid out in a transatlantic context 50 years before the founding of the Gaelic League. The role of the diaspora in international networks of cultural activism before the establishment of the League is particularly evident in a letter sent by Fr. James Keegan of St. Louis, Minneapolis on August 15, 1890, to John Glynn, editor of the *Tuam News* in Galway. Glynn outlines key work to be done for the language:

1. We must get the language and culture into schools and colleges;
2. We must open the entire Irish national press daily, weekly and monthly to contributions in Irish;
3. We must publish Irish books, ancient middle and modern. Also we must compile and publish cheap and good text books;
4. We must circulate Irish literature;
5. We must gather funds for the carrying out of the projects here laid down. (National Library of Ireland, MS 3254)

The majority of these demands were carried out by the Gaelic League, which was established 3 years after the letter was sent and by Douglas Hyde (who undertook a tour of America to raise funds for the Gaelic League and its proposed projects 15 years later in 1905/1906). This shows that networks from the US continued to influence not only the language revival in Ireland, but also political, educational, and cultural developments in the decades that followed.

It is also clear from newspaper and periodical accounts between c. 1857–1887 that the Irish language community was seen as a group of people who had a similar native language instead of people who lived in the same geographical place, as with the Gaeltacht regions today. The study of this group in the US moves away from the concept of a mere geographical area and instead concentrates on the language community themselves as a network of people who transcended linguistic boundaries and borders in their correspondence and association with the language movement. These were native speakers linguistically rather than geographically grouped, coherent with Anderson's (1983) theory of an imagined community. As Bru-na and Wilsdon suggest, it was at the time of the language revival that a:

reconstruction of an Irish cultural identity by engaging their audiences across geographical borders, class, language, education, religion, and different media. [...] It captur[ed] the complex upheaval of the time through sustained engagement with spaces where the material and ideal "organising" energies converged, collided, and blended. (2014, 4)

Transatlantic networks between the Irish diaspora in Ireland and the US in terms of cultural activism and print media continued to influence the language revival and political and cultural developments throughout the pre-revival and revival years. Far from being fragmented parallel movements separated by thousands of miles, in fact, revival organisations and publications were inextricably linked from the outset creating a greater capacity for productive organisation leading to the implementation of a new ideology and a new context for language and culture as a transatlantic concept.

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