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## The GAA and the sporting Irish

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What makes the Irish different, not just in the world of sport but in terms of culture generally, is the Gaelic Athletic Association. It was central to the formation and development of cultural nationalism towards the end of nineteenth century and to the project of promoting and developing Irish cultural difference. Throughout the twentieth century, the GAA developed local roots that permeated throughout every county and every village. It became central to family and community life. It reached into people's hearts, minds and bodies. It became central to their identity, to the way they saw themselves and related to others. For many people, the GAA was not just a sport, it was a way of being. As Séan Kelly, current MEP and former GAA President, put it when writing about his childhood, the GAA was 'as natural for me as eating, talking or walking'.<sup>1</sup>

But the GAA is not just rural, male and local. It has become urban, female and global. Take, for example, Irene. She is in her late thirties and a civil servant. Like her brothers, when she was young she joined the local GAA club. It was second nature for them. She grew up in Dublin. Not as many girls played camogie (the female version of hurling) but, in the family, school and club in which she grew up, the GAA was for men and women. It was common to see boys and girls walking down the street in her local area with hurls in their hands.

Irene was immersed in Gaelic traditions from a young age, her father having been involved in the same club, Ballyboden-St Endas, in south County Dublin for many years. Born in Kilkenny, a county widely regarded as being at the forefront of hurling on the island, he had moved to Dublin, joined the club and, over the years, became a key figure fulfilling various leadership positions. The club and the GAA became part and parcel of Irene's daily life. It was a way of creating meaning and sustaining bonds. But it was more than that. It was also a moral code. It was about how life should be led.

Irene and her brothers played hurling, camogie and Gaelic football throughout

their youth and adult lives. Like many other Irish sporting families, they were involved in the daily routine of cleaning football boots, washing playing clothes – often those of other team players – preparing food for visiting teams, going to home and away matches to support club teams and making annual pilgrimages to Croke Park. The family immersed themselves in many fundraising activities to extend the facilities (training grounds and playing pitches) needed for the club's growing membership, and particularly when the local clubhouse had to be rebuilt after it was destroyed by fire. The back garden of the family home was a space for practicing hurling, using the walls as a backdrop against which to endlessly strike and catch the *sliotar*. Their heroes were not just the international pop stars of the day – Michael Jackson, Madonna, Take That and the Spice Girls – but also hurlers such as Liam Fennelly, D. J. Carey and, latterly, Henry Shefflin and Conal Keaney.

The club continues to grow. Every Saturday morning up to two hundred school-aged children come to be coached in the basic skills of the game. Over the years, Irene has played her part and coached youth and junior camogie teams. There are strong links to local primary schools in which hurling and football are the main sports. The club and the schools work together as a form of cultural academy. They are part of a network that spreads throughout Ireland and beyond. Each of the estimated 2615 GAA clubs globally has a central role to play in communal bonding and belonging. Many communities and parishes are literally and figuratively built around the GAA club.

For Irene, as for many others, the GAA was more than just a sport. It was, in Séan Kelly's words, about building and developing deep social bonds that embody 'genuine fellow feeling, generosity without thought of cost [and] willingness to do anything for someone you genuinely appreciated and admired'.<sup>2</sup> Being immersed in Gaelic culture did not only enable Irene to form a strong sense of social identity; it was also an opportunity for self-fulfilment, to express her sporting prowess in an era when women's involvement in other sports in Ireland was less prevalent.

Irene took this sense of belonging with her when she relocated to Europe in a professional career move. She found a new psychological home in Belgium Gaels. The club brought a sense of the familiar in an otherwise unfamiliar European multicultural environment.<sup>3</sup> There, as in many other Irish corners of the world, Gaelic games take place amid emblems and rituals that reflect and maintain Irish cultural difference. For more than a hundred years, the GAA has provided a platform for the preservation and articulation of ethnic Irishness within and beyond the island.<sup>4</sup> It is stitched inexorably into family, community and parish life like no other sporting or cultural organisation.

What follows is a brief historical examination of some of the processes by which Gaelic games became the cultural heartbeat of the nation. I then consider the uniqueness of Gaelic games set against the broad outline of patterns of participation in sport across the world more generally. Here, the focus is on the distinctive commitment to an amateur ethos as reflected in the importance of community, or

what Tovey and Share have termed the ‘urge to community’.<sup>5</sup> In this context, I argue that the GAA is the dominant marker of Irish cultural identity and difference, not only because of the objective reality of it as an institution and how it permeates families and communities but also because of the images and identities it conjures up, and the thoughts, emotions and actions it inspires.

### From cultural protectors to cosmopolitan patrons

The GAA was founded in 1884 with the objective of promoting interest in Irish sporting and athletic pastimes, particularly Gaelic football, hurling, handball and athletics. From its inception, through its formal rules of membership, it also embodied an explicit opposition to British cultural imperialism. In its organisational infancy and reflecting the political mood of the time, the Association passed a rule (21) prohibiting its members from participating in those sports most closely associated with British colonialism – rugby union, association football (soccer), hockey and any other ‘garrison’ game. The GAA was an ideological movement and there was a constant struggle to maintain the purity of the movement and avoid all potential sources of contamination. There was extreme vigilance. For example, in 1930, Seán O’Ryan, the President of the Association, wrote to the National Athletics and Cycling Association of Ireland complaining of the organisation’s decision to send an athletics team to the inaugural British Empire Games to be held that year.<sup>6</sup>

But towards the end of the twentieth century, the fundamentalist dimension of the movement began to wane. Rule 21 was repealed in 1971. And in 2005, during Séan Kelly’s presidential tenure, a motion on another rule (42) was passed by the GAA Congress which paved the way for so-called garrison games – soccer and rugby union – to be played in Croke Park. The amendment to rule 42 was widely heralded as a public demonstration of the degree to which a historically protectionist and culturally reactionary association had become more confident and outward-looking and, increasingly, embodied a global outlook. The GAA began to capture the contemporary cultural *Zeitgeist* and expressed (publicly at least) a clear sense of organisational and cultural cohesiveness, and national confidence. This was not always the case. In fact, objective and perceptual expressions of Irish culture have been historically contested, and sport, notably Gaelic games, has played an important role in the shifting dynamics of sameness, difference, bonding and belonging.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was unclear whether, in the midst of national debate between various competing elements of Irish culture, a cultural accord could be achieved. This was a hothouse of often confusing cultural and political contradictions in which changing constituencies of educated working-class, middle-class and upper-class Catholics and Protestants sought to conserve and cohere their particular notions of Irish identity. While the GAA

banned policemen and soldiers from playing Gaelic games and pastimes, some of its own members – including Michael Cusack, a founding member of the Association – competed in, and attended, many other sports such as cricket, soccer and rugby union matches.

This period, described by Elias and Dunning as the second phase of sportisation, was an era in which the co-mingling of sporting, political, economic and social processes led to the establishment of many of the modern sporting associations we know today.<sup>7</sup> In Ireland, there emerged the Football Association of Ireland and the Irish Football Association, the Irish Rugby Football Association, what we know today as Athletics Ireland (a modern antecedent of the bifurcation of athletics and cycling, and subsequently of partition), the Irish Cricket, Hockey and Golfing Unions and many others.

In the midst of this, a cultural revolution was led by the GAA and the Gaelic League.<sup>8</sup> The GAA sought to democratise Irish athletics, to revive traditional games like hurling and to harness the nationalist movement. While advocates of the GAA and nationalism portrayed the early development of the association as something of a prairie fire, in reality there have been peaks and troughs in its development over the past 130 years or so. For instance, a late nineteenth-century collapse of the GAA in many areas was followed by its sporting revival in the first decades of the 1900s. The popularity of Gaelic football and hurling have also ebbed and flowed such that, today, the former is an island-wide sport while hurling is confined to a much smaller number of counties.

The GAA went on to become one of the chief platforms for the expression of cultural nationalism in the twentieth century, being influenced by, and influential in, political issues of the day. For example, the GAA supported the Irish Volunteers after they were founded in 1913. The Association became increasingly radicalised during and after the 1916 Easter Rising. The massacre by the Royal Irish Constabulary of fourteen people in Croke Park on 'Bloody Sunday' in 1920 came to be a crown of martyrdom in the promotion of sportive nationalism. Because it did not recognise Irish partition, operated on an all-Ireland basis and banned foreign (English) games, GAA became the largest 'national' sporting organisation in the Irish Free State. It also became a major political force closely aligned with government figures, neo-traditionalist Catholic clerics, teachers and civil servants. All of this was buttressed over the course of the 1900s by an emerging nationwide network of clubs built on, and across, parish boundaries. But as an ideological movement it was often divisive. In Northern Ireland for instance, the GAA became central to the formation of a nationalist 'state within a state' in which the dream of a united Ireland was not just imagined but realised in matches and participation in island-wide committees, sporting structures and competitions. Today, the GAA story is decidedly different. It has been heavily influenced by the realities of operating in a partitioned island and a divided society.<sup>9</sup> By the late twentieth century the cultural heartbeat of the Irish nation had morphed into an organisation

characterised by an alluring mix of cosmopolitanism and neoconservatism. Today, there is a tangible commitment to standards of governance and administration that resemble a professional sports organisation. The ethos is maintained through a rigorous enforcement of rules within every club. At the same time, the Association has become a highly successful commercial organisation, particularly in relation to marketing Croke Park as a tourist spot and for holding meetings, conferences and weddings. The modern GAA espouses the principles of inclusion and diversity in which the opportunity to participate in Gaelic games and culture is afforded to all irrespective of nationality, religion, ethnicity, age and ability. This is reflected in the increasing number of immigrants playing Gaelic games.

All of this sits alongside the palpable desire by the Association to preserve Irish uniqueness, to maintain the amateur status of its games and, latterly, to celebrate cultural and ethnic difference within its membership. But what makes the GAA and Ireland unique in modern sport is that it is an amateur organisation. With the exception of those employed full-time in the running of commercial aspects of the stadia and conference facilities at Croke Park, the GAA functions as an island-wide organisation of unpaid volunteers working at local parish, club, county and provincial levels.

As Dónal Óg Cusack – one of the icons of the GAA who as a homosexual epitomises the new cultural diversity of the Association – put it, ‘all that energy and progress to move on is a part of the character of the GAA clubs everywhere, of the organisation which built Croke Park and a network of massive grounds as cathedrals to amateur games.’<sup>10</sup> It is the abiding amateur ethos, and its roots in the distinctive Irish ‘urge to community’ – be that at parish, club or county level – that distinguishes it from most modern sports worldwide. The Association has become one of the key components of the collective self-representation of Irish society. Gaelic games set apart and give unique expression to particular notions of Irish community described by Séan Kelly as simply the ‘the way of things’.<sup>11</sup>

### **The urge to community**

Research reveals the importance of place in everyday life in Ireland. Despite being economically and socially transformed over the previous thirty years, fictional villages like Peace’s ‘Inveresk’ and Inglis’s ‘Ballivor’ retain a strong and pervasive sense of their own distinct identity, ‘of being special places in the world’.<sup>12</sup> There are many factors involved in the lasting importance of family and community in Ireland. Besides the GAA, there was the dominance of agricultural production throughout most of the twentieth century. This was linked to family farms which, in turn were linked to the dominance of the Catholic Church in civil society and everyday life. All of these factors led to a unique form of modernisation.

This brings us back to the issue of perceived and real identities and the interaction between them. *Objectively* speaking, Ireland has been transformed, socially

and economically. Everyday life in Ireland today is structured far more by market and media forces than was the case fifty years ago. The emphasis is more on self-realisation and liberal individualism than on self-denial. Yet one of the enduring *perceived* differences between modern Ireland and the rest of the world is that many of the Irish believe – partly because of the cultural attachment to the GAA and the Catholic Church – that they do community not just differently but better.

Whether real in nature, these perceived differences are real in their consequences. Not by coincidence, then, adherence to communal values in sport has also persisted for longer on the island of Ireland. As an Irish Catholic national identity was developed and consolidated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the GAA was at the heart of a moral doctrine that stressed the importance of mutual identification, mutual dependence and collective solidarity, particularly in rural life. In this regard, the GAA is both the literal (i.e. real) and figurative (symbolic) heartbeat of Irish communities and culture today. Not only does it co-exist with other forms of civil life in Ireland but it is to the forefront in espousing amateur values. That amateurism was at the heart of modern sport around the world is well recognised. But it is the particular form of Irish amateurism that stands apart, encompassing as it does strong forms of communal reciprocity, bonding and belonging that are rooted in the local.

That the GAA is the largest voluntary association on the island means that it represents a not insignificant sphere of social relations based uniquely on trust and reciprocity. In the face of increasing individualisation, the relationships between GAA members and supporters endure, whether on the basis of parish and club, county and province. There is a unique blend of solidarity and rivalry. Involvement in the GAA is, above all, about identity, bonding and belonging. And while there are often intense rivalries, sometimes leading to violence, these are relatively insignificant and perhaps more a reflection of the intense commitment and loyalty that members have to their clubs and counties.

In parishes, clubs and everyday family and community life, the GAA is one of the dominant ways for people to create meaning, a sense of identity and a sense of belonging. Irish people talk of being a Kerryman, a Galway woman or from established GAA towns, villages or clubs like Cloyne, Young Irelands, Crossmaglen Rangers, Bellaghy and Clann na nGael. They distinguish themselves by wearing club and county colours, not just on the day of a match but on many other social occasions and in their everyday lives. As Roy Keane, the former Irish soccer international, put it:

It's about local pride, that's what GAA is – people representing their parishes and the streets where they grew up ... Gaelic football in Ireland is different. They all come from their local parishes. They don't move clubs when they get fed up. They represent the people they're brought up with. The supporters are brilliant, they mix well, there's a good atmosphere and they take defeat well.<sup>13</sup>

The rooting of Gaelic games as part of the urge to community is also evident in other ways, e.g. in the naming of various GAA competitions after 'ordinary' Irish people and in the ways in which GAA activities and their outcomes become deeply embedded into the folklore and history of Irish people and Irish places, to be relived as part of the creation and maintenance of collective memory. Heroes of Gaelic games – Jack Lynch, D. J. Carey, Mick O'Connell, Dónal Óg Cusack, Angela Downey, Mary Jo Curran and others – are people who share more or less the same sort of daily lives and lifestyles as those who pay to watch them. Being able to engage in Gaelic practices (or to associate with them) can be used to attain social acceptance, social status and honour – just like being a 'good Catholic' used to do.

This sense of bonding and belonging is maintained despite the fact that many GAA members participate in other sports that have gained popularity across the island. And while Gaelic sports might be exceptional as markers of identity, bonding, belonging and collective memory, when it comes to the broad outlines of modern sport more generally, and the way sport has become a central aspect of everyday life for many people, the sporting Irish are, in many ways, similar to the rest of the world. This is because there are common patterns to the ways in which modern sports have assumed economic, cultural and political significance throughout the world.

### **The wider significance of modern sports**

Irish participation in sport might be distinctive in terms of the literal and figurative distinctiveness of Gaelic games but, as a nation, Ireland is located more or less within the typical European parameters of participation in sport and physical activity. When taken to incorporate the full spectrum of activities involving physical exertion and skill in which individuals or team vie against themselves, another or others for leisure or competitive purposes, sport has become a major social and cultural activity in Ireland.<sup>14</sup>

Gaelic football is the most popular sport, attracting between 30 to 40 per cent of all sports attendances followed by hurling, soccer and rugby union. The All-Ireland football final is the most watched sporting event in Ireland, the 2012 game having been viewed by more than a quarter of the island's total population of roughly 6.2 million people. The most popular participation sports and physical activities in Ireland involve indoor and outdoor spaces and include swimming, golf, aerobics, soccer, cycling, Gaelic football and snooker/billiards.<sup>15</sup> In economic terms, the Federation of Irish Sport estimates that sports tourism, including horse racing, generates in excess of €800 million annually. Sport stimulates €1.8 billion of Irish household expenditure annually and supports in excess of 38,000 jobs or two per cent of the workforce in the Republic of Ireland.<sup>16</sup> In Northern Ireland, in 2006 it was estimated that sport-related activity added £452 million to the economy, corresponding to almost two per cent of total value added in the region, while

13,700 people were in sports-related employment there (1.99 per cent of total employment).<sup>17</sup>

The economic impact of this cultural practice is signalled even further by the contribution of sport to gross domestic product. In the Republic and Northern Ireland, sport contributes approximately 1.4 per cent to gross domestic product and two per cent to gross value added, while the related fiscal return from sport is estimated to be almost one and a half times that invested.<sup>18</sup> Sport is also the largest single source of volunteering in Ireland having over a quarter of a million volunteers each week according to some conservative estimates.<sup>19</sup>

As is the case in other European countries, these more tangible economic dimensions of sport are closely intertwined with culture, tradition and history. Beyond the island-wide Gaelic games community, modern sports and leisure lifestyles are equally embedded in the social fabric of everyday life. Brigid and Michael, fitness instructors in Cork city and Belfast respectively, observe this entangling in the pattern of people's lives, in the idea that sport is good for physical and mental health and in the increasing awareness of health and lifestyle choices on the island. What we might call personal exercise is one of the most popular types of wider sports-related activities. Irish men and women, young and old, make the daily or weekly trip to the local gym where they put their bodies through a series of activities designed, primarily, with physical fitness and health in mind, but that also reflect a growing investment in contemporary physical culture across the island. Beyond immediate sporting competition per se, going to the gym and 'working out' have become an equally important source of physical and social capital.

Still, competitive sport enshrines the value of achievement in upholding a standard of excellence and building an achievement-orientated national character. It is the context in which collective identities are crystallised, whether it is at parish, club, team, county, provincial or national level. Therefore, while I have argued for the unique contribution of the GAA, it is important to recognise the complexity and status of Irish sport as a whole, reflected in the myriads of sports throughout the island, in rugby union, soccer, cycling, hockey, bowling and athletics, all with their own clubs and teams.

As well as being a strong form of collective identity, sport has become a significant form of social and political capital. Sport is a major form of social integration and networking. It has become an important ideological mechanism of social integration for migrant and minority peoples. At a micro level, success in sport is often a pathway into local and national politics. At a macro level, sport galvanises national identity and is used by the Dublin and Stormont governments as a means of maintaining loyalty and commitment to the state.

There is some tangible basis then to the claim that sport is a new religion of sorts for the Irish. As we have seen, the full significance of sport in any one cultural context can be found not in its popularity or economic return alone but in the

manner in which it imparts key social meanings about identities and ways of being. Sport is seen as central to the richness and depth of Irish culture. For example, it is claimed that Ireland's ancient Brehon laws featured Gaelic games, and the Celtic legend of Cuchulainn is specifically associated with hurling.<sup>20</sup> This folklore is fused with contemporary Irish rural and urban sporting lifestyles, celebration and rituals so much so that some would even say that sport, including exercise and health lifestyles, is the new drug or opiate of a more secular and modern Ireland.<sup>21</sup> The empirical question then is not whether sport has wider social significance in modern Ireland than in other societies. This is patently not the case irrespective of which measures are applied.

Rather, in the context of studies of cultural difference, the focus is on those social dynamics that become important in distinguishing between 'them' and 'us', between the Irish and 'others'. The emphasis is on beliefs, feelings and action tendencies that are loaded on to these identities and distinctions, and on the ways in which Irish people take these to be true about themselves. Perceptions of cultural difference have real consequences for Irish personality structures and in how the Irish describe themselves.

Consider, for example, the role of modesty. It is not that other people are not modest, but rather that it is more of a cultural trait or strategy among the Irish. The champion jockey A. P. McCoy was described by his peers as 'very easy to get on with. You don't hear him shouting or squealing – he doesn't think he's better than anyone else ... he's a very modest fella and has always been like that.' The Olympic and world champion boxer Katie Taylor is also lauded for her 'modesty in front of camera' and 'unassuming nature.'<sup>22</sup> Irish sports stars are recommended not to 'get above their station' for being Irish is a 'way of being in the world that shuns and shows disdain for ambition, selfishness and materialism.'<sup>23</sup>

We like our heroes humble in Ireland, strong, silent types who keep the head down and go about their business in an uncomplicated manner. It is an unattractive trait, this Irish begrudgery which clicks into gear when our stars get 'above themselves' and can lead to a sense of satisfaction when they eventually, and inevitably, have an off-day.<sup>24</sup>

Where, historically, modesty, prudery and humility penetrated further into Irish bodies and, particularly women's bodies, sport has become a major form of self-fulfilment and realisation in contemporary Ireland. Historically, Irish women were mothers above all else but, since the 1900s, they have participated in hockey and camogie, and they have become boxers, Gaelic footballers and rugby players. In the last forty years or so Irish women have also led the way in terms of challenging patriarchal norms in, and through, contact sports in particular.

In contemporary Ireland sport represents, then, a particular mix of continuity and change and one means by which we can observe culture, in its real and symbolic guises. We see Irish culture at many different levels in the ordinary lives

of millions of individual Irish people and in the ways in which they engage in all kinds of sports and leisure activities that make them similar to other people, particularly in Western societies. We observe it in the wider significance of sport as an autonomous cultural field in modern societies. But in terms of Western sport, it is the GAA and the spirit of amateurism, voluntarism and the urge to community that make Irish sport different.

### Conclusion

From the perspective of broad patterns of sports participation, the Irish love their sport, no more or less significantly than many other Europeans. Whether or not sport has become the new religion in Western society, it is certainly not a cultural epiphenomenon. It has moved centre stage in social and cultural life. It is not simply escapism or insignificant spare-time activity. Sport permeates all aspects of social life and has achieved economic, cultural, historical, political and symbolic significance. Sport, then, is an important lens through which Irish culture can be observed and analysed.

On the island of Ireland, sport demonstrates diversity in terms of how people see and understand themselves and others. However, what makes Irish sport different, perceptually and objectively speaking, is the GAA. And what makes the GAA different is the way that it is stitched into family, community and parish life. In a world of mass media and globalised sport, it has remained the dominant sport in Ireland. While the Association is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan and, in so doing, reshaping the connection between the local and the global on the island, it is still characterised by the dominance of amateurism and volunteerism.

The traditional fear of contamination still persists in many quarters of the GAA, but there is also an increasing acceptance of difference and sporting cosmopolitanism. The importance of community is enshrined in Gaelic games and in continued representations of familial and communal reciprocity that were adopted, historically, as one marker of Irish difference. In this regard, markers of identity work not only because of the objective reality they capture but also because of the images, identities and associations they conjure up and the thoughts, emotions and actions they inspire. It is this which remains at the heart of how the sporting Irish and what makes the Irish different.

### Notes

- 1 Séan Kelly, *Rule 42 and All That* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2008), p. 44.
- 2 Séan Kelly, *Rule 42 and All That*, p. 197.
- 3 In a related sense, Seán Kelly's 2009 election to the European Parliament was also intimately tied to his GAA profile.
- 4 See Paul Darby, *Gaelic Games, Nationalism and the Irish Diaspora in the United States* (Dublin, UCD Press, 2009) for an in-depth study of GAA communities in the US.

- 5 Hilary Tovey and Perry Share, *A Sociology of Ireland* (Dublin: Gil and Macmillan, 2003), p. 116.
- 6 Seán O’Ryan, ‘Empire Games: Letter from President, GAA’, *The Kerryman*, 2 August 1930.
- 7 See Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2008).
- 8 The latter was established in 1893 by Douglas Hyde to foster Irish culture and the Irish language, including particular notions of sobriety and conduct.
- 9 See, for example: Adrian Devine and Frances Devine, ‘The Politics of Sports Tourism in Northern Ireland’, *Sport & Tourism*, 9:2 (2004), pp. 171–82; Alan Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism and Globalization* (New York: SUNY Press, 2001); David Hassan, ‘Sport, Identity and Irish Nationalism in Northern Ireland’, in Alan Bairner (ed.), *Sport and the Irish: Histories, Identities, Issues* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), pp.123–39.
- 10 See Donal Óg Cusack, *Come What May: The Autobiography* (Dublin: Penguin, 2009), p. vii.
- 11 Kelly, *Rule 42 and All That*, p. 37.
- 12 See Tovey and Share, *A Sociology of Ireland*, p.111.
- 13 <http://www.irishexaminer.com/sport/gaa/keane-all-ireland-bigger-than-world-cup-final-131391.html>.
- 14 The Council of Europe defines sport as ‘all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels’ ([www.coe.int/t/dg4/epas/resources/texts/Rec\(92\)13rev\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/epas/resources/texts/Rec(92)13rev_en.pdf)).
- 15 Arthur Aughey and John Oakland, *Irish Civilization: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 125.
- 16 See <http://irishsport.ie/wpress/index.php/about-us/background/>. In 2009, an estimated 1.24 million people attended horse race meetings throughout Ireland: [http://hrpressoffice.ie/assets/2013/03/Racing\\_The\\_Irish\\_Way.pdf](http://hrpressoffice.ie/assets/2013/03/Racing_The_Irish_Way.pdf). This equates to approximately one-fifth of the island’s population.
- 17 See [www.sportni.net/NR/rdonlyres/789790EE-73AC-42E3-AECC-CC9E42D397C3/0/EconomicImpactofSport.pdf](http://www.sportni.net/NR/rdonlyres/789790EE-73AC-42E3-AECC-CC9E42D397C3/0/EconomicImpactofSport.pdf). Here Sport NI included the following sectors in its economic analysis: sports clothing and footwear; sports equipment; health and fitness; other participant sports; boats; spectator sports; sport gambling; sport TV and video; sport-related publications and sport-related travel.
- 18 Interestingly, most estimates of the economic return on sport exclude any analysis of the costs associated with the immediate diagnosis and treatment of sports-related injuries, the related impact on absenteeism from work and the longer-term health consequences for overall quality of life. See Rupert Kisser and Robert Bauer, *The Burden of Sport Injuries in the European Union* (Vienna: Kuratorium für Verkehrssicherheit KFV), available at [www.eurosafe.eu.com/csi/eurosafe2006.nsf/wwwAssets/9F41F776F8CE8F25C1257849004134D4/\\$file/WP4%20Sport\\_Burden\\_Report%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.eurosafe.eu.com/csi/eurosafe2006.nsf/wwwAssets/9F41F776F8CE8F25C1257849004134D4/$file/WP4%20Sport_Burden_Report%20FINAL.pdf).
- 19 Irish Sports Council, *Irish Sports Monitor 2011 Annual Report* (Dublin: Irish Sports Council).
- 20 Cuchulainn also appears in Manx and Scottish folklore.
- 21 See, for example, *Irish Independent*, 24 August 2013, ‘On dark days, we rejoice in sport as opium of the masses’.
- 22 [www.bbc.co.uk/sport/o/horse-racing/22311838](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/o/horse-racing/22311838), accessed 14 August 2013; <http://thecorknews.ie/content/‘million-dollar-baby’-george-hook-salutes-inspirational-irish-boxer-katie-taylor>; <http://www.morganmckinley.ie/article/katie-taylor-olympic-champion>, accessed 14 August 2013.

- 23 Tom Inglis, *Global Ireland: Same Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 5.
- 24 [www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2004/1217/ireland/damn-the-begrudgers-oaposdriscoll-is-the-greatest-343632132.html](http://www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2004/1217/ireland/damn-the-begrudgers-oaposdriscoll-is-the-greatest-343632132.html).