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Where Are the Irish Girls?

Girlhood, Irishness, and LT Meade

Susan Cahill

In 1906, the Irish author LT Meade was dubbed "The Queen of Girls'-Book Makers"[1] by a scathing reviewer of four of her novels in *The Saturday Review* on 15 December, who asked "How is Mrs Meade possible?" because of her prodigious output and popularity with a young female readership. The review resulted in a plethora of letters to the editor in the following weeks, including an indignant reply from Meade herself and an impassioned letter of defense from a group of Dulwich schoolgirls who proclaimed: "We her girl-friends will not stop reading her books, the writer of the most thrilling stories, the stories which we all love." The editor's snarky and derisive comments under the girls' letter clearly state his perspective on Meade, asking the school to "try and set at least a tolerably high standard of reading" and aligning her with the provincial and the middle-class: "in Dulwich Mrs. Meade is a local celebrity, a thing loved of the suburban mind" (Hawkes-Smith 1907: 81) which prompted the teachers of the Dulwich High School for Girls to respond with a list of what would be thought of as the more appropriate literature that the girls had been reading at school, which included Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Scott. This did not placate the editor however, who responded on 2 February 1907, "Girls who read at school Ivanhoe and the Heroes … prefer "Turquoise and Ruby" [Meade's novel]. Does this look as though their teaching had as much effect as one might hope on these children's taste in reading?" (143). This very public spat about the suitability of Meade, her literary value, and the education of girls places Meade at the center of such debates and illustrates the presence of a girls' culture at odds with official ideas about what constitutes appropriate literature for girls. Importantly also, girls themselves were making their voices heard in the debates; the Dulwich girls who jumped to Meade's defense were thirteen years old.

Meade was beloved by girls and a popularizer of girls' cultures, and her output is an early example of a youth culture that is not understood and is disapproved of by the adult generation. In 1898, she

topped a poll run by the periodical *The Girl's Realm* to discover the favorite author among its readers, and her high position in a variety of other polls throughout the period testifies to her popularity among her young female audience; as Helen Bittel notes: "Meade's girls' novels … collectively enjoyed a wider circulation than the works of most Victorian writers for either 'general' or juveniles" (2006: para. 2). Largely credited with popularizing the school story, she was an extraordinarily prolific writer, writing somewhere near three hundred books in a range of genres including romance, crime fiction, and sensation, career, and supernatural novels, but she is best known for the girls' school story. However, by 1929 Wilson Library Bulletin had included her on a list of books "Not to be Circulated"—a list of children's books that public librarians were recommended to remove from their shelves because of their lack of literary value (Mitchell 1995). Meade's books are now long out of print, and she is rarely remembered in children's literature criticism, except as a footnote or brief mention, although in recent years she seems to be enjoying renewed critical interest.[2] However, what is important for the purposes of this chapter is Meade's popularity, combined with her status as an Irish writer for girls who often features Irish girls as narrators or significant characters.[3]

As historian Angela Woollacott recently argued, studying girlhood can reveal the dynamics of the structural aspects of colonialism since girls are often the most marginalized subjects of colonialism given their age and sex, often compounded by their nationality and class (Woollacott 2014). This chapter explores the popularity of stories about the Irish girl in the late nineteenth century alongside the significant number of Irish women writers, of whom Meade is perhaps the most popular, who wrote for a young female audience, and who, like Meade, are now largely forgotten. The chapter considers the importance of Meade's Irish girls within a conception of girlhood that is both intensely marketable and linked culturally to anxieties about consumerism and artificiality. Meade's work, I will argue, demonstrates assumptions about femininity, Irishness, girlhood, economics, and class (and their intersections) particular to the period, as well as the role that writing for girls is seen to have in the inculcation of such discourses. Such an examination—of a popular yet neglected writer—lays bare the gender bias of the Irish cultural imaginary to permit a rethinking of the structuring binaries that often govern Irish culture, while also demonstrating the ways in which the study of girlhoods can make such dynamics visible. A study of girls changes the story of early twentieth-century Ireland, enabling a more complex reading not just of gender dynamics, but of the narratives of the nation that circulated during this period, which were pre-

dominantly categorized in terms of nationalism and political unrest. To begin, I first outline briefly the apparent invisibility of girlhood in the Irish literary context and argue instead that the Irish girl emerges as a potent and salient figure when one turns to popular fiction of this period. The chapter then explores constructions of the Irish girl in the work of Meade, as the most popular of the writers who represent Irish girlhood, focusing on novels such as *Wild Kitty* (1897) as well as her editorial work for the girls' magazine *Atalanta.*

Irish novelists who wrote for girls, like Meade, were popular during their writing careers but have subsequently been forgotten and critically neglected, and their books are now long out of print.[4] It is likely that their popularity (and thus their association with popular or low culture) and their young female middle-class audiences account in a major way for their neglect. Furthermore, in an Irish context, this literature does not generally fit into the types of cultural nationalism popular toward the end of the nineteenth century. John Wilson Foster, in his recent study of the popular novel in Ireland during this period, argues that the disregard of such fiction in critical accounts owes much to orthodox histories of the Irish Literary Revival, in which popular novels that do not reflect the concerns of the revival are ignored.[5] The "Irish 'grand narrative,'" Foster writes, "is essentially a male narrative that does not require female novelists in order for it to be told, especially middle-class and upper middle-class novelists with a Victorian or Edwardian outlook and set of values" (2008: 26). Although the Irish writers of popular girls' fiction do not all share similar outlooks, politics, and sets of values, they all suffer from this gender and class bias among the critics, the result of which is an invisibility of Irish girls' culture and Irish girlhood in critical accounts of the period. This invisibility is symptomatic of a more general representative elision of girlhood in Irish culture.

Given a well-documented tendency in British colonial discourses to represent Ireland and the Irish in feminized, infantilized, or atavistic forms, Irish nationalist representations tended to stress hyper-masculine heroics, and often used the figure of the male child as an effective metaphor in the articulation of Ireland as a new and independent nation (Sisson 2004; Meaney 2006).[6] Kelly S. McGovern discusses the invisibility of girlhood in nationalist discourses, in which passive femininity is invoked in terms of maturity: the Irish woman is cast as mother, reproductive guarantor of the future of the nation (and this national child is invariably male), or she is depicted in symbolic terms, as an object, a representative of the nation (McGovern 2009). Girlhood is thus written out in national terms, in which the boy represents the ideal-

ized, heroic future of the nation and woman the passive producer of this future. Irish feminist critics have criticized this masculinist impulse of Irish studies, which articulates a self-birthing national subject that is based on and sustained by the erasure of the maternal body (Sullivan 2000, 2002, 2005). Personifications of the Irish nation that took female forms, such as Mother Ireland, Cathleen Ní Houlihan, and Róisín Dubh, serve to secure the female body as an object: she who sustains and nurtures the nation but has no place or subjectivity within it. The masculinist narrative of the Irish Literary Revival tends to be read in terms of a male genealogy, often an Oedipal conflict between father and son (Meaney 2006). Such dynamics offer little space for considerations of the Irish girl.

Catherine Driscoll's observation that girlhood "emerged as a way of understanding, positioning, and disciplining that period of transition" (2002: 59) between childhood and adulthood also helps to explain Irish studies' lack of interest in girlhood. As I argue elsewhere, the notions of an "unfinished, persistently in-process girlhood then, is of little use in terms of the Irish national subject (defined through masculinity) that is being articulated in the late nineteenth century" (Cahill 2014: 170), which further compounds an invisibility of girlhood in critical accounts of the period. However, while the Irish girl may not appear to be absent in cultural representations, the proliferation of fiction by Irish women writers aimed at girl readers and containing Irish female characters demonstrates instead her cultural presence. As I shall show, this has important ramifications for the rethinking and refiguring of the Irish national imaginary.

Despite a critical absence surrounding girls' literary culture in Ireland in this period, there were a significant number of Irish women writing children's books aimed at girls, particularly between 1870 and 1920. Stephen J. Brown, in *A Reader's Guide to Irish Fiction* (1910) dedicates a section to Stories for Girls, in which he includes Violet Finny's *A Daughter of Erin,* six novels by Rosa Mulholland, two by her sister Clara, several by Katharine Tynan, and one novel by E. O'Connor Morris.[7] To add to this catalog, from surveys of publisher lists and contemporary reviews I have compiled the following list of authors writing for and about Irish girls: May Crommelin (c. 1850–1930), Flora Shaw (1852–1929), Margaret Wolfe Hungerford (1855–1897), Josephine M. Callwell (c. 1858–1935), Winifred M. Letts (1882–1972), and Elizabeth Lysaght (fl. 1872).[8] Many of the novels by these writers were published by Blackie and Sons, a firm that printed a significant number of children's books and had opened a Dublin office by 1884 (Benson 2011). Irish writers feature strongly on their lists of children's books—in the endpapers of

Rosa Mulholland's *Giannetta: A Girl's Story of Herself,* published in 1889, books by JM Callwell, Katharine Tynan, Elizabeth J. Lysaght, and Violet G. Finny are all advertised under the heading Books for Girls, and they were still being advertised six years later in the endpapers of a book by popular English boys' writer GA Henty. Indeed, *Giannetta* was serialized in the *Sheffield Weekly Independent* in 1890 and reprinted into the 1920s. Such popularity is important when we are considering the books' role in projecting and thereby confirming stereotypes of Irishness in the popular imagination in Britain and beyond. Interestingly, the apparent invisibility of the Irish girl in Irish culture is matched by her hypervisibility in British culture.

In the late nineteenth century, the girl became the subject of much fretful debate in various British and American periodicals concerned by her growing independence and her connections to consumerism and to sexuality. Eliza Lynn Linton's diatribe against the "Girl of the Period," published anonymously in *The Saturday Review* in 1868, is a well-known example of this anxiety. Linton admonishes the girl of the period for what was seen to be her immoral investment in fashion, elaborate dress, artificial beauty, and consumerism, which, for Linton, brings the girl into dangerous alliance with overt sexuality and the commercial sphere. As Peter Stoneley remarks, "Linton suggested that the 'Girl' had adopted the extravagant dress of the prostitute, and that in doing so, she too had turned herself into a commodity" (2003: 31). Stoneley examines the ways in which the middle-class girl, her identity, agency, and development, become tied up in consumerism: "The process of buying into womanhood not only provides the ideological foundation for the girl's identity, but it also transforms her into something to be bought" (5). Girls' fiction also becomes part of this consumerist strategy, offering identities to be bought into and tapping into girls' budding consumer identity. As Michelle Smith notes in her discussion of advertising in *Girl's Own Paper,* the girl's "identity was being built not only as a reader, but also as a consumer" (2011: 34). But books and magazines aimed at girls also operate as commercial objects, and these contributed to moral anxieties about girls' reading, particularly evident in that heated debate surrounding Meade's suitability in *The Saturday Review.*[9]

In Ireland, commercialized fiction tended to become associated with Englishness, especially in the context of the Irish Literary Revival. In Douglas Hyde's famous polemic on de-Anglicizing Ireland, his appeal is that, "we … set our face sternly against penny dreadfuls, shilling shockers, and still more the garbage of vulgar English weeklies" (1894: 159). John Wilson Foster's recent book on the popular novel in Ireland reveals the complex ways in which nationality and popular fiction in-

tertwined in the period, not always articulating clear distinctions between Englishness and Irishness, in a way that was surely problematic to a revivalist sensibility aiming to create a distinct national literature (2008: 35). The combination of popularity, a female readership, and commercial interest—which looks to a broad readership and tends to blur national boundaries, as Foster points out: "British and Irish popular novelists shared much the same readership and nourished the same idea of what constituted the concerns and style of an effective novel" (34)—fuels numerous debates, placing fictional literature about the Irish girl at crucial junctures of social and cultural anxieties of the period. For the readership of a writer like Meade, oriented toward England, the Irish girl, as I argue, becomes a means through which such anxieties are negotiated and expelled beyond the borders of the nation.

Linton's girl of the period also brings ideas of nationality into play. Although the girl represents "a national madness," Linton insists that she has abandoned her Englishness: "Of late years we have changed the pattern, and have given to the world a race of women as utterly unlike the old insular ideal as if we had created another nation altogether" (1868: 340). Linton's persistent recourse to nationhood in the article illustrates the intimate conceptual relationship between this construct and gender. I would also argue that Meade's Irish girls take on the characteristics of the girl of the period and allow the English girls in the narratives, and, by extension, their English readers, a means of negotiating the desirable and undesirable attributes of commercial girlhood, while enabling these readers to remain sufficiently distant in terms of nationality.

The articulations of girlhood, nationality, and the commercial that emerge in Meade's work are complex, varied, and often contradictory. Irish girls populate many of Meade's novels, and their representations negotiate a range of assumptions and associations surrounding Irishness and girlhood in the period. The Irish girls in her school stories owe much to late-nineteenth-century stereotypes of Irishness, particularly Matthew Arnold's sentimental feminine Celt and the exaggerated brogue of stage Irishry. They are often wild, rebellious, frank in speech, unruly in manners, and overemotional, and their English counterparts in the stories are both attracted to and repelled by them for these reasons. Their Irishness also tends to present them as spectacles, as highly visible presences in the English schools through their choice of clothes, speech, accent, and stories told of home. Furthermore, these Irish girls are not always assimilated into the English schools they inhabit and disrupt.

Meade's books were consumed both in Britain and Ireland and specifically marketed in endpapers and publishers' catalogues as "suitable

for prizes and presentation," and their sumptuous production values attest to this: they are desirable objects with their gold and color blocking and illustrations. They bear a particular moral impulse as book prizes for good behavior, yet also appeal to a consumer market driven by spectacle and appearance. This coupling of spectacle with morality is important since Meade has the Irish girls in her novels function comparably.

Mitchell, in her study of a younger manifestation of the New Woman, cites Meade as a novelist for "the new girl," quoting Meade, who writes in an article on girls' schools: "girls, so trained, must surely be the New Women for whom we long" (Meade 1895: 463, quoted in Mitchell 1995: 22).[10] Many of Meade's novels are consciously marketed for the new girl, using the visual languages of tennis or golf (*The Lady of the Forest* (1889) features an image of a girl carrying a golf club on the cover, although the novel has no mention of the game in it), bicycles, and bobs. Furthermore, Meade's Irish girls in her later work, such as *Wild Kitty* (1897) and *The Rebel of the School* (1902), seem to speak back to debates circulating in the second half of the nineteenth century concerning the new girl's extravagance of dress, artificiality, and participation in consumer culture, and this showiness is also celebrated on the covers. Although Linton's article predates a book like *Wild Kitty* by some thirty years, the concerns she articulates persist throughout the century and, indeed, as far as 1922 when Linton's article is reprinted in *The Saturday Review* with the commentary: "Our own feeling is that it is just as necessary today as Mrs. Lynn Linton seems to have found it fifty years ago" (Anon. 1922: 250). Linton continued writing in similar terms throughout the 1890s, directing her attention toward the New Woman. What is notable about Meade's school stories is the way she negotiates the negative qualities ascribed to the girl of the period, associating them with Irishness instead of morality to offer a convenient distance for English readers.

The Irish girl in these novels portrays many of the traits of the girl of the period, particularly lavish dress. This is not the first time that extravagance, Irishness, and the girl of the period have been combined. Indeed, in an earlier short-lived publication, *The Girl of the Period Miscellany* (1869), which pokes light-hearted fun at its titular heroine in all her guises, three articles are devoted to Irish girls of the period—"Dublin Darlings," "Cork Coquettes," and "Limerick Lasses."[11] The girls from each region display slight variations, but they are marked in their difference from their English counterparts (framed as prototypes or originals) by the display of a certain excessiveness; the London girl plays a part, but the Dublin girl exhibits "a disarming candour, an overwhelm-

ing simplicity" (Anon. 1869a: 19). The Cork Coquette is even more so: "The Cork Coquette, let me whisper it in the smallest of types, *is a little extravagant.* She dresses in a far more sumptuous style than her Dublin sister. She has the latest affairs from Paris. No sooner, over there, do the women shape themselves so and so, than the Cork Coquette shapes herself so and so. And if I may write it, she shapes herself *more* so and so than the originals" (Anon. 1869b: 80). Her nationalist sympathies are laughed off as attractive fripperies: "What matter is it if the lovely traitor arms herself with a green scarf, a bouquet of shamrock, and emerald ribbons, and attacks our Government by cheering a Fenian? It won't hurt the British Constitution; and she must look so nice doing it" (Anon. 1869b: 82). She is also particularly shaped by her choice of light reading and is, "by consequence faintly tinged with the hand-squeezing romanticism which pervades the barley-sugar illustrations to the love of tales of our period" (81). Although fashioned by her reading matter, and even more fashionable than her London and Parisian counterparts, the Irish girl also seems inclined toward girl of the period characteristics. Her embodiment of risqué elements of nationalism, flirtatiousness, and dress are mediated and dissolved here through her lack of guile, affectation, and intellectual rigor; "the plague of blue fever," for example, "has never spoiled her" (80). The construction of these girls as naturally and unselfconsciously excessive offers an interesting relationship between nation and gender, gestured towards in Linton's piece. In the logic of these articles, English girls perform girl of the period characteristics, while Irish girls embody them; by implication, the articles offer the English girl a reassuring performative distance.

Meade's Irish girls function in a similar manner. *Wild Kitty* concerns the arrival of Kitty Malone, an Irish girl, at an English school, sent by her father to "be taught manners," for she is too wild. Kitty is described as "very pretty, very untidy, very overdressed" (1897: 12), and her extensive wardrobe of clothes is considered by the English girls and their mothers to be too showy and inappropriate for a girl of her age: "As Kitty spoke she pulled out a pink nun's-veiling, made up with innumerable ruffles and frills and laces and embroidery, a really very pretty dress for quite a gay party, but totally unsuitable for a schoolgirl of Kitty Malone's age" (22). Meade (and by implication the reader) seems to gain pleasure from sartorial descriptions as well as her narrating and noting of Kitty's excesses. Kitty is frank in speech, unruly, emotional, and vain, but very pretty. Meade does not seem to condemn her for these traits as Linton would, and nor does Kitty learn any manners in the course of the narrative; Kitty remains untamed, as she had predicted: "They call me the wild Irish girl at home, and the wild Irish girl

I'll be to the end of the chapter" (Meade 1897: 18). Kitty's declaration speaks to Meade's awareness of the wild Irish girl as a literary construction, directly referencing both Sydney Owenson's 1806 novel, *The Wild Irish Girl,* and *Harry Lorrequer* by Anglo-Irish writer Charles Lever.[12]

Kitty is very wealthy and has easy access to money, which stimulates the crisis in the plot since she lends money to Elma, a school friend less fortunate than herself—breaking the most important rule of the school. Within the moral economy of the novel, though, Kitty is not remonstrated for this lapse; rather, the blame falls on Elma for coveting money not rightfully hers. Kitty's consumerism becomes linked with her Irishness, which thus excuses her, and Dublin is constructed as a locus of fashionable goods not available to the English girls. The headmistress of the school, who, though despairing of Kitty's unruliness, lists her "talents" as possessing money, beauty, an attractive manner, and nice clothes, says: "You are pretty, and I am willing to admit it. Now, a bright face like yours, with an attractive manner, is a gift. Then, besides, you have—you will be astonished when I say this—lots of becoming dress, which adds to the charm of your appearance. Kitty, if you were all you might be—if you would use that money which God has given you, that beauty which God has given you, that attractive manner which God has given you, all for His service—why, you could do a great deal in the world" (Meade 1897: 108). In a way, an attractive appearance as a talent to be used in God's service links to the lavish production of Meade's novels as schoolbook prizes. To be a spectacle has moral value also, and indeed, it seems that Meade is concerned with visualizing the girl, with rendering her visible.

Beth Rodgers, in one of the few detailed engagements with Meade's work and its relationship to her Irishness, highlights the ways in which Meade structures Irishness as connected to notions of independence and the revolt against oppression. For Rodgers, when the Irish girl in *The Rebel of the School* (1902), Kathleen, sets up a secret society called The Wild Irish Girls for the girls in the lowest social strata of the school, it is Kathleen's nationality that becomes the means through which oppression can be articulated. As Rodgers writes, in the novel "Irishness becomes a tool with which to forge community amongst the fringes of society" (2013: 161). Furthermore, Rodgers argues that Meade's construction of her Wild Irish Girls as markedly different from their English counterparts serves to create attractive characters and her availing of popular stereotypes all "allow Meade to articulate and promote ideals about female independence, higher education, and campaigns against social injustice, which are in keeping with her journalistic interest in these topics" (162). Meade was a champion for girls' educational

and professional opportunities. *Atalanta,* the girls literary magazine founded and edited by Meade from 1887 to 1889, ran several articles on these subjects, including a series entitled "Girls who won success," which featured Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first woman to obtain a medical degree in Britain and be included on the British medical register (Taylor 1888). *Atalanta* also ran monthly competitions for literary essays of which a young Evelyn Sharp (later a suffragette and children's writer) won several, and also awarded prizes for artwork.[13] *Atalanta* was involved in producing a community of girls as readers and scholars, but also as writers and visual artists.

For Helen Bittel, the inconsistencies in terms of feminist politics evident in Meade's novels for girls, decried by most critics, are instead worth exploring: "Particularly where they are most confusing or troubling, they reveal something significant about the complicated ways in which new ideas about gender were resisted, modified, negotiated, and assimilated in the 1890s" (2006: para. 3). This is important in a consideration of Meade as a figure. Yes, her plots and characters are stereotypical and often undermine the New Woman thrust of many of her narratives. Yes, she mass-produced popular fiction. But much of what Meade was concerned with was the cultural visibility of the girl, as a reader, writer, participant in education, consumer, spectacle, and as a disruptive presence. Importantly, that disruptive presence is most often an Irish girl who has become invisible in critical accounts of the Irish Literary Revival, which render women as emblems or passive producers of the nation. In this context, the critical invisibility of a writer like Meade, as a participant in a growing culture of visualizing girlhood, is ironic: though often conservative, conventional, and stereotypical, Meade's writing and editorial work produces girls as active participants in a critical and artistic culture and as presences that disrupt the norm, just as the intensely visible Irish girl disrupts the staid school. This visibility also functions for the English reader as a means by which contemporary anxieties concerning consumerism, extravagance in fashion and behavior, and rebellion can be projected onto the figure of the Irish girl.

Although Kitty is not tamed in the course of the narrative, that these anxieties can be assuaged in their association with this figure and her removal to Ireland at the end of the narrative recalls Linton's avowal that the girl of the period was "another nation altogether" (1868: 340). Meade, as Rodgers points out, constructs Ireland as an "idealised place of much greater possibility and opportunity" than the English school: Elma, the poor pupil who had broken the school's primary rule in borrowing money from Kitty, travels to Ireland with Kitty where "Elma's intelligence will be nurtured and she will be sent to Girton College,

irrespective of her poverty and class status" (2013: 160). Intriguingly, in Meade's work, Ireland here becomes the space of the girl of the period and the new girl, associated with consumerism and fashion as well as independence and education—and all of these elements come together in the material production of Meade's books. Although Irish girlhood appears invisible in cultural representation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when one examines literary production one instead finds a proliferation of Irish women writers producing fiction for girls and configuring Irish girlhood in ways that resonate both within and beyond the texts. Tina O'Toole's nuanced exploration of Meade's fiction in the context of New Woman writers concludes that Meade "gives her girl readers license to move, not only in a corporeal sense, but also in geographical and ideological terms" (2013: 66). The category crossing that Meade's work enacts through the figure of the girl—between Ireland and England, the commercial sphere and the moral sphere, economics and aesthetics, and the conservative and the liberal—demonstrates the ways in which girlhood studies can act as a transformative paradigm.

Focusing on an author like Meade and her celebration of Irish girls permits us to move away from the ideological constraints imposed by dominant representations of gender in Irish studies as outlined above—the national subject as a male supported by a maternal ground—that continue to have profound and negative effects on Ireland's political and social policies, which consistently insist on women's reproductive value. The complexities of Meade's girls, who participate in a consumer marketplace and function to assuage readers' anxieties about said consumerism yet also formulate communities of disruptive potential, offer numerous potential entry points for thinking differently about British/Irish relations, binaries between popular fiction and literature, and the gendered narratives that bolster constructions of Irish identity. Significantly then, in terms of this book's larger concerns and in line with Woollacott's argument about the importance of girlhood studies, a focus on girlhood reveals important biases relating to gender, age, class, and economics, which when applied to the context of Irish studies highlight a large body of work that troubles national narratives that erase girlhood or fix the girl's body in a reproductive function. That such narratives still desperately need to be troubled is evidenced by the recent case of a young Congolese asylum-seeker in Ireland, pregnant as a result of rape, who was forced to undergo a Caesarean section at twenty-five weeks because of Ireland's restrictive abortion laws. Although separated by a century from this case, Meade's representations of mobile and disruptive girls offer important paradigms for rethinking girlhood in twenty-first century Ireland. Meade's complexities (both in

terms of the girls she figures and her own status as a writer) enact a form of category crossing that can be mapped more generally on to constructions of transitional girlhood that are articulated in the period. The liminal status of girlhood simultaneously enables a critical exploration of another border crossing—the relationship of nation and gender in a trans-national Irish and English context. Thus, Meade's work, through the figure of the Irish girl, allows for an interrogation of both the colonial imagination (the wild Irish girl who embodies frivolous girlhood) and the nationalist masculinist narrative of early twentieth-century Irish culture.

Acknowledgements

This chapter benefited, as always, from the insightful comments and suggestions of Claire Bracken and Emma Radley.

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Notes

1. Meade is fifth-favorite in Constance Barnicoat's survey of colonial girls' reading in "The Reading of the Colonial Girl," published in *The Nineteenth Century* in December 1906. She is also fifth in Florence Low's "The Reading of the Modern Girl" in the same periodical in February 1906. See Bittel (2006).
2. See Reynolds (1990); Mitchell (1995); Norcia (2004); Bittel (2006); Miller (2006); Liggins (2007); Dawson (2009, 2013); Rodgers (2012, 2013, 2014); O'Toole (2013).
3. Meade was born in Bandon, County Cork, in 1844 and grew up in a rectory ten miles from the town. See O'Toole (2013).
4. These writers include Josephine M. Callwell (c. 1858–1935), May Crommelin (c. 1850–1930), Violet G. Finny (fl. 1892), Kathleen Fitzpatrick (1872–?), Margaret Wolfe Hungerford (1855–1897), Winifred M. Letts (1882–1972),

Elizabeth Lysaght (fl. 1872), Clara Mulholland (c. 1856–c. 1934), Rosa Mulholland (1841–1921), Flora Shaw (1852–1929), and Katharine Tynan (1861–1931).

5. The Irish Literary Revival describes a creative movement that flourished at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Its aim was to differentiate and define a distinctively Irish national literature, culture, and identity, however that might be articulated. The period is still subject to intense debate, particularly concerning the relationships between literary history, ideas surrounding national identity, and gender, and, much more recently, the role of children's literature.
6. Recent scholarship on Irish children's literature of this period has identified a profusion of nationalist and propagandist literature aimed at children and the ways in which Irish mythology was mobilized to inspire a sense of national heritage and identity (Hay 2005; Flanagan 2005; West 1994). However, this scholarship focuses almost exclusively on the reading practices and literary culture of boys. Literature for girls and female writers of children's literature are rarely, if ever, mentioned in the few surveys of Irish children's literature that exist.
7. Meade is not mentioned in this list but appears elsewhere in the publication under the heading "Stories of Present-Day Ireland (Peasantry)," along with Rosa Mulholland. It is notable that Meade appears only once in Brown's *Guide,* and perhaps her generic flexibility and the fact that her most popular school stories are set in English schools account for her lack of inclusion under the "Stories for Girls" heading.
8. See Loeber et al. (2006) for publication details for these authors.
9. See Flint (1993).
10. This new girl is coterminous with the New Woman, a term that emerged in this decade to denote perceived changes in femininity associated with a concern for "professional and educational opportunities for women and girls, advocacy for single women, and marriage reform" (Bittel 2006: para. 2).
11. See Moruzi (2009) for a detailed examination of the publication and its general tone.
12. The quotation references the lyrics of a song in *Harry Lorrequer,* a novel by Anglo-Irish writer Charles Lever. Beth Rodgers draws connections between Sydney Owenson's self-fashioning and both Meade's own "self-conscious performance of 'Celtic temperament'" (2013: 154) and her deployment of this performance through the Irish girls in her novels.
13. For Evelyn Sharp references see *Atalanta* 1887–1888, Volume 1. She is commended for essays in April and May and highly commended for work published in June, July, and September.

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