

**Musical Culture and the Spirit of Irish
Nationalism, c. 1848-1972**

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Short Abstract

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This thesis surveys musical culture's relationship with Irish nationalism after the Irish confederacy's rebellion in 1848 until the beginning of the Northern Irish Troubles in 1972. It is the first such study to engage with a wide range of source material, including not only songs but also sources generated by political actors and organisations. It thus asks how far music and dance contributed to political movements and identities. It demonstrates that music provided propaganda, while performances created spectacles that attracted attention and asserted the strength, territorial claims, and military credentials of particular movements. Nationalists and unionists appropriated music and musical rituals from history, Britain, and one another. Appropriated British army rituals represented paramilitaries as legitimate national armies. Recycling songs made compositions easier to learn and suggested that new organisations acted as part of a continuous, historical movement. Appropriating songs and rituals from opponents asserted superiority over those opponents. Songs marked national allegiance and were therefore fought over extensively. For theorists and revivalists, defining Irish music and dance constructed notions of Irish nationhood. However, this thesis is as much about qualifying the claims often made for musical culture. One result of the failure to engage comprehensively with extra-musical source material is that studies often crudely credit music with having inspired unity among Irishmen and resistance against the colonial ruler. Music's relationship with resistance was more nuanced, and could cultivate disunity as much as the opposite. This study also problematises distinctions between British, unionist, and nationalist culture. These were not discrete categories, but

III

overlapping soundscapes that interacted with and penetrated one another. Nor is 'traditional' music neatly distinguished from 'modern', 'commercial' music. As this study explains, traditional music's advocates demonstrated a consistent willingness to adapt and engage with modern methods. Overall, this thesis provides unprecedented insight into music's impact on nationalist politics.

Long Abstract

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In 1842, a group of Irish journalists, well-educated and nationalist in outlook, launched the *Nation* newspaper.¹ The newspaper preached an emotive form of nationalism that romanticised rebellion, principally by publishing songs conveying its ideology. The songs were reproduced in an anthology, *The Spirit of the Nation*, which went through several editions over the succeeding decades.² When nationalist uprising came in 1848, it was in the form of the Irish Confederacy, a radical splinter of the ‘Young Ireland’ movement with which the *Nation* was associated. The revolt was unsuccessful and short-lived, and both the radicalism and the popularity of the *Nation* declined thereafter. Nevertheless, the nationalist musical culture the newspaper espoused continued to influence Irish politics, including radical Republican groups and moderate constitutionalists. Meanwhile, politically-minded unionist groups like the Protestant Orange Order expressed their opposition to a Catholic-dominated independent or united Ireland through often strikingly similar songs and musical performances.

The period of concern to the present study is that from the Irish Confederacy’s failed uprising in 1848, to the beginning of the Northern Ireland Troubles in 1972. It aims, firstly, to examine the language of popular nationalism in song, music and dance.³

Songs contain fragments of public opinion, and often that of political actors and

¹ *Nation*, 15th Oct. 1842; R. Davis, *The Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin, 1987), p. 19.

² *The Spirit of the Nation* (1843); *The Spirit of the Nation* (1845).

³ G. Stedman Jones, ‘The Language of Chartism’ in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860* (London, 1982), pp. 21, 35.

narratives not recorded in more traditional archival evidence. Analysing how, why and where audiences consumed musical culture, and the communal identities and links they fostered in doing so, helps to explain nationalism's appeal, its success, and its internal divisions.⁴ It illustrates the range and nature of nationalist and unionist propaganda, and captures the ideologies of the rival political and national identities that have characterised modern Irish history. In music and dance, activists and theorists sought to construct the nation and the national body, including debates about gender, sexual propriety and their consequences for nationhood. From the late nineteenth century in particular, a series of organisations sought to define and promote what they perceived to be Irish forms of music and dance. These included the Gaelic League, primarily concerned with reviving the Irish language, and later (from 1951) Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, for whom music was the highest priority. In their search for a timeless musical culture, these activists hoped to unearth an undiluted national character. Therefore, debates about the authenticity of nationalist cultures are considered throughout this work. Musical culture was never an exclusively unifying force. Rather, its musical and extra-musical qualities were regularly matters of dispute between different groups. As such, this thesis examines the ways in which nationalists used musical culture against one another, as well as against the British. Drawing upon recent methodological developments regarding music and space, this thesis demonstrates that music could control and define political spaces, as well as undermine the attempts of opponents to do likewise. This work also argues that the rhetorical timelessness of nationalist musical culture masks a constant process of reinvention. Overall, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that musical culture was not only politically nationalist or unionist in

⁴ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2003), p. 6.

content, but that it was an active agent in the formation of political communities, the construction of ideologies, and the activities of historical actors.

In this thesis, I explore the musical cultures in which Ireland's various nationalist and unionist groups operated using an interdisciplinary approach combining history, musicology and ethnomusicology. The existing historiography on the subject is patchy, inconsistent and often limited. There are a number of excellent studies of specific songs, individual composers and choreographers, or particular events.⁵ Nevertheless, there remains no adequate overall survey. In some instances, these studies exaggerate particular aspects of a musical culture. Some, for example, have too readily interpreted the marching bands of the Orange Order as the musical manifestation of a sectarian unionist conspiracy.⁶ Others classify the Public Dance Halls Act (1935) as the act of a government subservient to the Catholic Church and cultural nationalists.⁷ By considering these instances, and others, as part of a wide-ranging study, this thesis provides more nuanced conclusions. Many of the most substantial works to date have been folklorist in approach, primarily concerned with collecting and preserving songs and dances. Such studies are particularly prevalent regarding dance.⁸ While these are useful resources for performers, they offer little to the historian interested in the influence and social function of such musical cultures. Terry Moylan's recent book, *The Indignant Muse*, is one example of such an approach. His book collects hundreds of

⁵ See for instance E. Morris, "'God Save the King' versus 'The Soldier's Song': The 1929 Trinity College National Anthem Dispute and the Politics of the Irish Free State', *Irish Historical Studies* 31 (121) (May 1998), pp. 72-90; B. O'Connor, *The Irish Dancing: Cultural Politics and Identities 1900-2000* (Cork, 2013).

⁶ D. Boulton, *The UVF 1966-73: An Anatomy of Loyalist Rebellion* (Dublin, 1973), pp. 15-27, 40, 115.

⁷ J. Smyth, 'Dancing, Depravity and all that Jazz: The Public Dance Halls Act of 1935', *History Ireland* 1 (2) (Summer, 1993), pp. 51-54.

⁸ For instance, B. Breathnach, *Dancing in Ireland* (Miltown-Malbay, 1983).

songs, but contains only a short introduction speculating on the political role that the songs performed. Even then, his claims are often misleading, for instance his assertion that there were no pro-treaty songs during the Irish Civil War (1922-1923).⁹

The most common reference text on nationalist music is that by Georges-Denis Zimmermann. Zimmermann's book has features of a folklorist anthology, but with more analysis. He identifies song origins, recurring themes, and variations of particular songs. His comments on music's political function, however, are speculative, and his source material rarely ventures beyond the songs themselves. 'There is no doubt,' he writes, 'that the Memory of the Dead, God Save Ireland, A Soldier's Song, A Nation Once Again and Step Together, had contributed to create the spirit of martial enthusiasm which sustained the volunteers since 1913'.¹⁰ Music may have had such effects, but his assertions remain unsubstantiated. His account also ceases in 1900, meaning that vast swathes of material remain unexplored, not least that relating to the revolutionary period of 1916-1923. Others, notably Harry White, take a musicological approach and dismiss songs of a political nature as aesthetically inadequate, with the result that such studies make little comment on the political role of those songs.¹¹

In contrast to White's musicological approach that dismisses such culture as aesthetically irrelevant, this thesis takes an approach informed by ethnomusicology and recent developments in 'new' musicology. While compositional technicalities are important, they must be understood with a view to their social function, rather than their subjective quality alone. Where conventional musicology may ultimately focus on the

⁹ T. Moylan, *The Indignant Muse: Poetry and Songs of the Irish Revolution* (Dublin, 2016).

¹⁰ G. Zimmermann, 'On Rebel Songs', *Ceol: A Journal of Irish Music* 2 (4) (1967-8), p. 89.

¹¹ H. White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970* (Cork, 1998), pp. 6-9, 69.

VIII

artistic merit of the works in question, these approaches, in the words of Frederic Lieberman, seek to explain ‘the social, political and economic functions in which musical life is embedded’.¹² Unlike the accounts described above, this thesis also takes a consciously historical approach to music. Rather than speculating on the vague influence of music on political actors, it engages closely with their personal narratives and the organisations in which they operated through a larger body of source material. In doing so, it provides a more nuanced and evidence-based account of music’s role in nationalist politics. Moreover, by taking a longer-term view than some of the more specific studies cited, it places events and organisations in their proper context. Thus, a traditional music organisation like Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann may appear to be deeply conservative in isolation. When considered over a longer period in comparison with previous groups with similar aims, however, its level of innovation and engagement with modern methods becomes apparent. This and other similar examples help to problematise the categories by which Irish music has often been defined. British, unionist, and nationalist cultures were not discrete categories, but overlapping products of the same soundscapes. Nor can ‘traditional’ music be neatly distinguished from ‘modern’, ‘commercial’ music. As this study explains, the willingness of traditional music’s advocates to adapt demonstrates close engagement with modern methods.

Chapter One is in three sections. The first looks at music’s role in the Fenian movement, the second the campaign for Home Rule, and the third the position of music in the late nineteenth-century cultural revival. It demonstrates that nationalist music was valuable

¹² F. Lieberman, ‘Should Ethnomusicology be Abolished?: Position Papers for the Ethnomusicology Interest Group at the 19th Annual Meeting of the College Music Society, Washington D.C., November, 1976’, *College Music Symposium* 17 (2) (Fall, 1977), p. 204.

for constitutional and physical force nationalists alike. It also examines how those defining Irish music sought to construct a national consciousness.

Chapter Two covers music's role during the revolutionary period (1913-1923). The first section shows how constitutionalists and revolutionaries competed over the symbolic value of nationalist songs between 1913 and 1921, with a particular focus on the 1918 election. It also analyses how music facilitated political and revolutionary activity.

Section two examines the relationship between music and the law, problematising narratives that suggest there was blanket suppression of political musical cultures.

Section three analyses the Civil War (1922-1923). It demonstrates that both sides sought to appropriate nationalist musical traditions to legitimise their cause and delegitimise that of their opponents.

Chapter Three is in two sections. The first looks at how political movements used music between 1923 and the start of the Northern Ireland Troubles in 1972. It demonstrates that the value of nationalistic music and performances was substantial for these groups, providing a link to the revolution that delivered Irish independence for otherwise moderate, mainstream political parties. The second section explores Irish musical revival during the same period, suggesting that so-called 'traditional' music was sustained by innovation, modernisation, and diversification.

Chapter Four is in three sections. The first covers nationalist music in Northern Irish politics before 1967, analysing how constitutional nationalists and physical force nationalists promoted their aims through music. It also suggests that the failure of nationalist political movements to employ music effectively was emblematic of the

failings of nationalism in general. Section two analyses the civil rights campaign and the injection of new musical cultures that it included. Section three surveys the additional fissures and innovations that characterised Republican musical cultures in the early stages of the Troubles between 1969 and 1972, including Republican attempts to appropriate civil rights music.

Chapter Five is in three sections. The first covers how political nationalists used dance and how cultural nationalists defined Irish dancing before 1923. It suggests that the latter defined Irish dance in line with Catholic tastes, but those definitions were not always followed. Section two analyses the position of dance between 1923 and 1935, including the ‘anti-jazz campaign’ and the Public Dance Halls Act (1935), traditionally accepted as a moment of State subservience to Catholicism, but reassessed here. Section three argues that Irish dance modernised after 1935, notably through increasing intercultural dialogue (e.g. with ballet) and the removal of foreign dance bans by cultural revival groups.

The final chapter compares unionist and nationalist musical cultures. It highlights many similarities and common influences, not least criticisms of the UK government. Of its two sections, the first covers 1848-1921. It suggests that, while nationalist and unionist musical cultures were strikingly similar, their common features did not align with the ancient Gaelic origins spoken of in nationalist rhetoric. Section two analyses unionist music until 1972. It considers how music contributed to a Northern Irish State-building project, and how unionists responded in music to the new political paradigm in a manner that entrenched divisions, epitomising a situation in which Northern Ireland was unpalatable for nationalists, and a united Ireland likewise for unionists.

This study's source material falls into three categories. The first is music itself in the form of songbooks, ballad sheets and recordings. In the course of gathering material, I have compiled a database of over 7,000 songs and dances. This provides substantial material on which to draw and facilitates forensic examination of when and how songs became popular. The second category concerns retrospective accounts, including memoirs and oral histories. Of the latter, the most substantial are those of the Bureau of Military History, statements collected after 1947 from participants in the revolution of 1916-1921. The thesis also utilises the Irish Folklore Collection, created in 1935 and consisting of manuscripts transcribed by folklore collectors from conversations or recordings, providing an ample supply of lyrics and descriptions of how songs were first encountered. The final category consists of contemporary material, including diaries, personal papers, minute books, the records of political parties, government documents and newspapers. None of these are new or revelatory sources for studying Irish politics, but the majority have not been tapped for the information they contain regarding musical culture. Unlike many retrospective narratives, they are less likely to have been created with the intention of casting the subject in a particular historical narrative. As such, they often facilitate more complex observations.

This study argues that music and dance served as important, participatory activities through which activists (nationalist and unionist) became involved in politics, connected with likeminded peers, and exercised political energies. Songs provided useful and accessible propaganda that could be quickly and easily adapted to new contexts (e.g. through altered lyrics). Songs celebrated leading figures and historical precedents,

romanticised violence and predicted victory. Even non-violent groups invoked songs of violent content. In performance, public musical displays in the form of marches created spectacles that conveyed the strength or legitimacy of the movement in question, attracting media attention and feeding the interest of supporters. Moreover, the sound created could intimidate opponents and claim autonomy over political space. When groups arrived at the territory or the political rallies of opponents and played their own songs, they asserted their ideology's dominance over the relevant space. Even when prevented from entering such spaces by walls or police lines, sound travelled where individuals could not. Finally, I look at how Irish musical culture has been defined, and how those definitions played into nation-building projects. By defining Irish music and dance as the antithesis of British cultures, and by seeking to 'revive' those 'traditions', cultural nationalists contributed to the construction of a national consciousness. Overall, I contribute a more detailed and considered account of musical culture's importance to Irish politics and culture than previous works have provided.

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Contents

Short Abstract	ii
Long Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	xiii
Abbreviations	2
Introduction: 'Ballads have long lost their revolutionary powers'	3
1 Music and Nationalism, 1848-1913: A Varied Soundscape	31
I 'Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall?': Music, Fenianism and Radical Nationalism	31
II Appropriating Radicalism: Nationalist Music and Home Rule	52
III Gaelicising 'The Seonín Maids of Eirinn': The Politics of Ireland's Musical Revivals	64
2 'Great Men and Straight Men'? Music and the Irish Revolution, 1913-1923	77
I Music, Radicalisation and Revolution, 1913-1921	77
II 'Oh, how we worship our Dora': Seditious Singing and British Laws	106
III 'We thought we fought for Ireland': Music and the Civil War	114
3 Music and the Politics of Nationalism in Independent Ireland, 1923-1972	129
I 'Three-Quarters of a Nation Once Again': Music and Party Politics	129
II 'Folk music alone will not supply our needs': Music and Cultural Nationalism	157
4 Music, Nationalism and Northern Ireland, 1923-1972	183
I 'This morning a man was hanged. This Evening we had a concert': Music, Nationalism and Northern Ireland, 1923-1967	183
II 'For the most part we played rebel songs': Music and Civil Rights.....	210
III 'Ireland for the Irish, we shall not be moved': Music and the Troubles	224
5 Dance and Nationalism, 1848-1972	236
I Inventing the Irish Dancer, 1848-1923	236
II 'Jazzing the Soul of the Nation Away': Dance and Dissent 1923-1935	254
III Modernising Irish Dance 1935-1972.....	272
6 'The flute would play only "the Protestant Boys"': Music and Unionism, 1848-1972...	288
I 'For England is now allied with the Pope': Unionist Musical Culture, 1848-1921	288
II Inventing Northern Ireland: Unionist Musical Culture, 1921-1972	317
Conclusion: The Spirit of whose Nation?	349
Bibliography	354
Discography	406
Filmography	408
List of Illustrations	409

Abbreviations

BB	Bodleian Ballads
BBCWAC	BBC Written Archive Centre
BMH	Bureau of Military History
CCCA	Cork City and County Archives
CO	Colonial Office Papers
DA	Diocesan Archives
DFA	Dept. of Foreign Affairs Papers
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
FAP	Frank Aiken Papers
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office Papers
FF	Fianna Fáil Papers
FG	Fine Gael Archives
GAAA	Gaelic Athletic Association Archive
GLIMB	Grand Lodge of Ireland Minute Books
HBS	Hilda Buckley Scrapbooks
HC	House of Commons
HL	House of Lords
IFC	Irish Folklore Collection
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
JDMAF	Joan Denise Moriarty and Aloys Fleischmann Papers
JDP	John Devoy Papers
JRP	John Redmond Papers
JUS	Dept. of Justice Papers
KG	Kilmainham Gaol
LDRD	Liam de Róiste Diaries
LOBP	Liam Ó Buachella (Banteer) Papers
MOHA	Museum of Orange Heritage Archive
MSPC	Military Service Pensions Collection
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NIO	Northern Ireland Office Papers
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NUIGA	National University of Ireland Galway Archives
PDLS	Personal Diary of Lillian Spender
PRES	Office of the Secretary to the President Papers
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
QUBA	Queens University Belfast Archives
RJD	Rosamund Jacob Diaries
RPGOL	Report of the Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland
SDB	Séamus de Búrca Papers
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
STE	Scarman Tribunal Evidence
TCDA	Trinity College Dublin Archives
TMB	Terence MacSwiney Biographies
TSCH	Department of the Taoiseach Papers
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
UWUC	Ulster Women's Unionist Council
WJD	William Johnston Diaries

Introduction

'Ballads have long lost their revolutionary powers'

*Your smear campaign is obvious we've seen it all before
You try to call us terrorists while you batter down the door
But from Rossport to Jobstown the 20 metre ban
Police brutality is black and tan!*

*No privatisation, Irish Water, Irish Nation,
No privatisation. Aaah shtop!¹*

In December 2014, in protest against the Irish government's proposed new water charges, thousands began 'sharing' songs online opposing the measures.² One of those, quoted above, is performed by 'The Rolling Tav Revue' and demonstrates the myriad of motifs on which political Irish music draws. Stylistically, its use of fiddles represents a longstanding association between 'traditional' music and politics. The reggae-influenced vocals and minimalist accompaniment as the band chant about people 'out on the streets, all marching to the same beat' reflects the impact of 1960s protest song. The direct, harsh singing of the verses is reminiscent both of ballad singers and punk, and the rebellious connotations thereof. Lyrically, the refrain 'Irish Water, Irish Nation' demonstrates the ease with which causes not necessarily nationalist in character are conflated with nationhood in song. The anachronistic comparison between Irish police and the Black and Tans, the ill-disciplined British reservists deployed during the Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921), similarly associates the protests with the cause of those who secured an independent Irish dominion nearly a century earlier. 'Irish Water, Irish Nation' reflects musical culture's potency in Ireland's recent history. In song, perhaps

¹ 'The Rolling Tav Revue---No Privatisation, Irish Water, Irish Nation!' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfEOLXR1gcA> (4th Dec. 2014).

² BBC Trending, 'Anger at Irish water charges surges online', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-30402456> (10th Dec. 2014).

more easily than in other forms of expression, it is possible to espouse controversial viewpoints, associate one's cause with national struggle, and attack the political hegemony. The Rolling Tav Revue's various stylistic and textual influences reflect nationalist music's persistence and adaptability. From the nineteenth-century Young Irelanders, through the Fenians, the Home Rule movement, Sinn Féin and the Anglo-Irish War to establishment politics in independent Ireland and civil rights protests in Northern Ireland, musical culture played an important role in the politics of Irish nationhood.

Musical culture has long provided an outlet for Irish nationalist aspirations. In 1716, one writer noted with distaste the tendency of broadside ballads to 'inflame the spirit of the common people'.³ Travelling singers, common in towns and markets, popularised ballads that appealed to the political tendencies of their paying audiences, attacking landlords and prophesying an Ireland rid of their English King.⁴ In the final decade of the eighteenth century, revolutionaries looked to the expected French invasion, expressing their hopes in popular songs. The oft recycled 'Shan Van Vocht' (Irish for 'poor old woman', a colloquial term for Ireland) promises that 'the French are on the sea' and that Ireland will be 'free'.⁵ The United Irishmen, nationalist revolutionaries who staged a failed rebellion in 1798, sought to capitalise on this music's popularity and political connotations.⁶ They published song collections, notably *Paddy's Resource*, which celebrated the cause of 'liberty' and 'freedom' for 'the old Irish nation' and

³ G. Zimmermann, *Songs of Irish Rebellion: Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs, 1780-1900* (Dublin, 1967), p. 35.

⁴ Zimmermann, *Songs*, pp. 15, 29; W. Allingham, 'Irish Ballad Singers and Irish Street Ballads', *Household Words* (94) (Jan. 1852), pp. 361-368.

⁵ Zimmermann, *Songs*, p. 133.

⁶ R. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 187.

aligned their cause with the French Revolution.⁷ They drew on melodies heard at the 1792 Belfast Harp Festival, organised by a group of musicians to promote the Irish harp. Here, Edward Bunting recorded and subsequently published a collection of the 'ancient' music performed in order to preserve it.⁸ Such efforts would, as this thesis demonstrates, become increasingly common.

From ballad singers to songbooks, producing nationalist music was a professional exercise with a genuine market. In the nineteenth century, poet Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* demonstrated the extent of that market. Moore stated that his mother's intense support for Catholic Emancipation influenced his politics from an early age.⁹ He set his lyrics to Bunting's melodies, and published the first edition of his collection in 1807.¹⁰ He was educated at Trinity College, where his friendship with Robert Emmet, subsequently executed for leading an abortive rebellion in 1803, exposed him to more radical political ideas.¹¹ On one occasion, Moore wrote, when he played Emmet a song from his collection – 'Let Erin Remember the Days of Old' – Emmet responded: 'Oh that I were at the head of twenty-thousand men, marching to that air!'.¹² Although difficult to verify, the anecdote illustrates both Moore's admiration for Emmet and the political connotations of his songs. Moore's *Melodies* used numerous nationalist motifs, heavily inspired by *Paddy's Resource*.¹³ 'Let Erin Remember the Days of Old' laments that Ireland's 'emerald gem' resides in the 'the crown of a stranger'.¹⁴ 'Oh! Breathe Not

⁷ *Paddy's Resource* (New York, 1798), pp. 5-10; Comerford, *Ireland*, p. 187.

⁸ R. Pine, *The Disappointed Bridge: Ireland and the Post-Colonial World* (Newcastle, 2014), p. 139.

⁹ T. Moore, *Memoirs, Journal & Correspondence* (London, 1853), p. 18.

¹⁰ R. Kelly, *Bard of Erin: The Life of Thomas Moore* (Dublin, 2008), p. 153.

¹¹ T. Moore, *Irish Melodies* (London, 1854), p. vii.

¹² Moore, *Memoirs*, p. 58.

¹³ M. Thuyente, *The Harp Re-Strung: The United Irishmen and the Rise of Irish Literary Nationalism* (Syracuse, 1994), p. 169.

¹⁴ Moore, *Melodies*, p. 15.

His Name' commemorates Emmet, pledging to 'keep his memory green in our souls'.¹⁵

Like ballad singers, Moore appealed to popular sentiments. By translating Bunting's 'ancient' melodies into an accessible, populist nationalist rhetoric, he met market demand. The collection went through five editions within the next six years, with several more thereafter.¹⁶ However, unlike the United Irishmen, Moore's enthusiasm for nationalist music never translated into participation in rebellion. Where Emmet envisaged leading men into battle to the accompaniment of Moore's music, Moore himself hoped to revive a music characterised by 'sadness' and 'the language of sorrow'.¹⁷ Reflecting on his music's influence, he insisted:

[T]here is no one who deprecates more sincerely than I do any appeal to the passions of an ignorant and angry multitude; but it is not through that gross and inflammable region of society a work of this nature could ever have been intended to circulate.¹⁸

Thus, while he sympathised with revolutionary ideals, he was ambivalent towards actual revolution. In 1811, referencing the fourth edition, he stated: 'ballads have long lost their revolutionary powers'.¹⁹ Instead of the 'angry multitude', Moore preferred London's upper-class drawing rooms.²⁰ It is with this environment that he became associated, although that did not preclude his songs being popular among the 'inflammable region of society'.

¹⁵ Moore, *Melodies*, pp. xx, 3.

¹⁶ T. Moore, *The Letters of Thomas Moore* (Oxford, 1964), p. 280; Pine, *Disappointed*, p. 146.

¹⁷ Pine, *Disappointed*, pp. 140-142, 149-150.

¹⁸ Moore, *Melodies*, p. 114.

¹⁹ Pine, *Disappointed*, p. 146.

²⁰ Moore, *Letters*, p. 784; Pine, *Disappointed*, p. 147.

In many ways, this thesis constitutes an exploration of Moore's hubris. In 1842, a group of young, well-educated journalists, nationalist in outlook, launched the *Nation* newspaper, of which the first issue was published in Dublin in October.²¹ Amongst its founders were Charles Gavan Duffy and Thomas Davis. The newspaper preached an emotive and romanticised form of nationalism, principally through songs. The value that they placed on songs stemmed from a belief in their potential to cultivate a revolutionary mind-set. Where Moore rejected notions that he inspired the 'angry multitude', Davis held that Irish musical culture had a 'political sway' with the power to incite 'violent passions', and that print media was the most efficient means by which to disseminate it.²² These 'Young Ireland' activists, as they were known, were products of nationalist politics. During his Monaghan childhood, Charles Gavan Duffy recalled being insulted for his Catholicism. He also loathed the sound of Orange (unionist) drummers.²³ *Nation* founder John Blake Dillon's father was a United Irishman.²⁴ Songwriter John O'Hagan's father, similarly, held nationalist views.²⁵ Davis, in many ways, was the exception, emerging from a Protestant, unionist background; his father was a British military surgeon. His political views, he said, developed in historical societies at University.²⁶

Davis described 'almost all the Irish or political songs' then circulating as too 'despairing' and 'too despondent or weak to content a people marching to independence

²¹ *Nation*, 15th Oct. 1842; R. Davis, *The Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin, 1987), p. 19.

²² T. Davis, 'Songs of Ireland' in T. Davis, *Essays and Poems with a Centenary Memoir, 1845-1945* (Dublin, 1945), p. 93; T. Davis, 'Songs of the Nation' in T. Davis, *Essays and Poems with a Centenary Memoir, 1845-1945* (Dublin, 1945), p. 107.

²³ Davis, *Young*, pp. 14-15.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 16.

²⁵ H. Mulvey, *Thomas Davis and Ireland: A Biographical Study* (Washington D.C., 2003), p. 109.

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 23-25.

as proudly as if they had never been slaves', while he considered Moore's *Melodies* too artistic and refined to be accessible to the masses.²⁷ He sought to rectify the want of 'strictly national lyrics' with songs chastising British rule, celebrating rebellion and prophesying victory.²⁸ From the *Nation*'s first issue, its songs denounced unscrupulous landlords and pledged a commitment to 'liberty'.²⁹ Future issues condemned 'Saxon' rule and glorified rebellion.³⁰ Their popularity with the paying public outstripped even that of Moore, with an estimated weekly circulation of 10,000.³¹ The writers reproduced their songs in multiple editions of an anthology, *The Spirit of the Nation*, indicative of the commercial demand for the songs therein.³² Nevertheless, they demonstrated many of the same ambiguities as Moore. Nearly all of the *Nation*'s prominent figures supported Daniel O'Connell's Repeal movement (which advocated reversal of the Act of Union), but their relationship with O'Connell was not entirely comfortable.³³ O'Connell quoted a song by Davis in a speech in 1843, and his son, John, contributed songs to the *Nation*.³⁴ Nevertheless, O'Connell described the *Nation*'s songs as 'poor rhymed dullness' and he did not utilise them to anything like the extent that politicians did in later years.³⁵ The songwriters themselves were highly equivocal about violence. Even in the assertive first issue, one song, 'We Want No Swords', insisted that their revolution would be one of the 'mind', not 'savage swords'.³⁶ Rebellion came in the form of the Irish Confederacy, a radical splinter of Young Ireland, but the *Nation*'s

²⁷ Davis, 'Songs of Ireland', p. 97; T. Davis, 'Our Music and Poetry' in T. Davis, *Essays and Poems with a Centenary Memoir, 1845-1945* (Dublin, 1945), p. 94; Comerford, *Ireland*, p. 188.

²⁸ Davis, 'Songs of Ireland', p. 98.

²⁹ *Nation*, 15th Oct. 1842.

³⁰ *Nation*, 28th Jan. 1843; *Nation*, 16th Sept. 1843.

³¹ M. McCann, 'Music and Politics in Ireland: The Specificity of the Folk Revival in Belfast', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 4 (1995), p. 58.

³² *The Spirit of the Nation* (Dublin, 1843); *The Spirit of the Nation* (Dublin, 1845), p. v.

³³ Mulvey, *Thomas*, p. 113.

³⁴ C. G. Duffy, *Young Ireland* (London, 1883), p. 349; *Spirit* (1845), pp. 41-42.

³⁵ Duffy, *Young*, p. 287.

³⁶ Davis, *Young*, p. 28; *Nation*, 15th Oct. 1842.

songwriters were not among the rebels.³⁷ While their attitude towards violence was heavily qualified, they were committed to separatism. Even as John Kells Ingram wrote that ‘no popular interest can now be furthered by violence’, he insisted that the assertions of some that he was ‘ashamed’ of having written ‘Memory of the Dead’, one of the *Nation*’s iconic songs, were ‘without foundation’.³⁸ When asked by future President Sean T. O’Kelly during O’Kelly’s time working in the National Library, Ingram reiterated this view emphatically: ‘I stand by every word of that ballad’.³⁹ The Confederacy’s revolt was unsuccessful, and the *Nation* declined in both radicalism and popularity thereafter, but their songs remained influential.

Music was equally important for unionists, notably for the fraternal Protestant society the Orange Order. The Order, founded in 1795, became synonymous with annual parades, characterised by political music and loud drumming (like that maligned by Duffy). The Apprentice Boys, too, held annual commemorations of Protestant victories over Catholics during the seventeenth-century Williamite Wars with prominent musical components. These organisations also printed songbooks including British patriotic songs, celebrations of defeated nationalist uprisings, and hymns. Chapter Six provides a more detailed background to unionist groups.

This study constitutes a political and cultural history of the period from the failed nationalist uprising in 1848 until 1972 and the start of the Northern Ireland Troubles. The long period means that individual examples, whose importance might be distorted in isolation, can be considered in their historical context. It aims, firstly, to examine the

³⁷ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989), p. 316.

³⁸ J. K. Ingram, *Sonnets and Other Poems* (London, 1900), p. 6.

³⁹ National Library of Ireland (henceforth NLI), Sean T. O’Kelly Papers, MS 48,044/3.

language of popular nationalism in song, music and dance.⁴⁰ Songs especially provide fragments of opinion, insights into political actors and sections of the public not recorded in more traditional political narratives. Analysing how, why and where audiences consumed musical culture, and the communal identities and links they fostered in doing so, helps to explain how Irish nationalism was conceived, became popular, and developed into organisations capable of challenging the political hegemony.⁴¹ It illustrates how nationalist and unionist movements presented themselves, and how they constructed national identities. In relation to dance, that includes constructions of gender, the body, and nationhood. For many, musical culture encapsulated a timeless, undiluted national character, and therefore debates about authentic nationalist cultures are also considered. As this suggests, musical culture was not a unifying national culture, but rather a point of regular contention between different groups. Thus, this thesis also examines ways in which nationalists used musical culture against one another. Music could control and define political spaces, and provided a weapon against opponents' attempts to do likewise. This study also suggests that claims for nationalist musical culture's timelessness mask a constant process of reinvention. Overall, it aims to demonstrate that musical culture was not only nationalist in content, but that it was an active agent in the formation of political communities, the construction of ideologies, and the activities of historical actors.

⁴⁰ G. Stedman Jones, 'The Language of Chartism' in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860* (London, 1982), pp. 21, 35.

⁴¹ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2003), p. 6.

Much of the existing literature on Irish musical culture is folklorist and descriptive, concerned with collecting music and dance or describing its technicalities.⁴² Many histories of dance especially have sought to describe steps and facilitate their imitation, but not interrogate their historical significance.⁴³ Others approach Irish musical culture more historically. Malcolm Chapman comments upon musical constructions of the Celt (including the Irish) as 'other'.⁴⁴ Luke Gibbons traces the impact of commercialisation and technological change on music in Ireland during the 1930s.⁴⁵ Marie McCarthy demonstrates that education created spaces for the transference of musical culture and, potentially, nation-building in the new Irish State after 1921.⁴⁶ Lillis Ó Laoire summarises the more high-profile nineteenth and twentieth-century musical cultures, though by necessity he only raises examples briefly with substantial omissions, not least music's political role (as opposed to power relations between genres).⁴⁷ These collections and cultural histories, while rarely addressing nationalist politics specifically, offer valuable contextual detail to the political historian.

Of those to engage with nationalist themes, the musicologist Harry White has been the most controversial. Building upon 'revisionist' critiques of Irish music aired by Joseph Ryan, White argues that an obsession with preserving folksongs – or 'Hibernian antiquities' – instead of integrating them with European musical forms prevented Ireland

⁴² F. Whelan, *The Complete Guide to Irish Dance* (Belfast, 2000); B. Breathnach, *Folk Music and the Dances of Ireland: A Comprehensive Study Examining the Basic Elements of Irish Folk Music and Dance Traditions* (Cork, 1996).

⁴³ H. Brennan, *The Story of Irish Dance* (Kerry, 1999), p. 32; Whelan, *Complete*, p. 20.

⁴⁴ M. Chapman, 'Thoughts on Celtic Music' in M. Stokes (ed.), *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford, 1994), p. 36.

⁴⁵ L. Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1996), p. 75.

⁴⁶ M. McCarthy, 'Music Education in the Emergent Nation State' in R. Pine (ed.), *Music in Ireland 1848-1998* (Cork, 1998), p. 66; M. McCarthy, 'Changing Cultural Landscapes: The Co-Existence of Musical Genres in Irish Culture and Education', *Irish Studies Review* 12 (1) (2004), pp. 51-61.

⁴⁷ L. Ó Laoire, 'Irish Music' in J. Cleary and C. Connolly (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 267-284.

from producing an 'art music of international currency' in the manner of other small nations, notably Poland and Finland.⁴⁸ To the extent that White engages with political content, it is to identify Davis and his ilk as exemplifying an 'aesthetic naivety' that prevented musicians from expressing their nationality through distinctly Irish forms, a criticism he extends to almost every composer in modern Irish history.⁴⁹ In this narrative, inadequate infrastructure and music's co-optation into political discourse forced Irish musicians to go abroad (e.g. Charles Villiers Stanford).⁵⁰ Irish music instead found its terminus in the literary 'music' of Yeats's poetry, and in the operatic forms of Joyce.⁵¹ White has restated himself, in Richard Pine's words 'almost verbatim, in text after text' and his conclusions do not become less problematic with repetition.⁵² The aggregation of all nationalists, cultural, moderate, and Republican, into a single bracket that rejected art music as 'alien' and Anglophile is one issue, for which Barra Ó Séaghdha has criticised him, as is his underlying assumption that traditional music's only value is as raw material for art music.⁵³ Others make similar arguments to White, some of which do no more than re-assert that there are links between nationalism and music without explaining or exploring those links in detail, instead lamenting the absence of the artistic merit demonstrated by comparable nations.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ H. White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970* (Cork, 1998), pp. 6-9, 69; J. Ryan, 'Nationalism and Music in Ireland' (PhD Thesis, Maynooth University, 1991).

⁴⁹ White, *Keepers*, pp. 5, 60.

⁵⁰ White, *Keepers*, p. 107; S. Lanier, "'It is New Strung and Shan't be Heard": Nationalism and Memory in the Irish Harp Tradition', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 8 (1999), pp. 1-26.

⁵¹ White, *Literary*, pp. 80, 153.

⁵² H. White, 'Music, Politics and the Irish Imagination' in R. Pine (ed.), *Music in Ireland, 1848-1998* (Cork, 1998), pp. 27-36; R. Pine, 'Review of Harry White and Brian Boydell (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*', *Irish University Review* 44 (2) (2014), pp. 399-405.

⁵³ G. Smyth, 'Review of *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970* by Harry White', *Popular Music* 18 (1) (Jan. 1999), pp. 156-158; B. O'Seaghdha, 'Silent Symphony', *Dublin Review of Books* <http://www.dr.b.ie/essays/silent-symphony> (19th Oct. 2012); P. Zuk, 'Words for Music Perhaps? Irishness, Criticism and the Art Tradition', *Irish Studies Review*, 12 (1) (2004), pp. 11-29.

⁵⁴ M. Fitzgerald and J. O'Flynn, 'Introduction', in M. Fitzgerald and J. O'Flynn, *Music and Identity in Ireland and Beyond* (Surrey, 2014), p. 32; Pine, *Disappointed*, pp. 139, 162.

While scholars have not always deemed Irish nationalist music worthy of academic inquiry, they have given considerable attention to its influence on literary figures, particularly William Butler Yeats and James Joyce. Given the extent to which Yeats commented upon Young Ireland and the 'lasting influence' of Davis, this is unsurprising.⁵⁵ Thus, Roy Foster describes Davis's importance to Yeats, while Edward Malins explores Yeats's attempts to incorporate the dynamics and rhythms of harpsichord music and folksongs into his poetry.⁵⁶ David Fitzpatrick, conversely, writes about unionist musical influences on Yeats, and Sylvia Ellis considers his dance plays.⁵⁷ Harry White demonstrates Joyce's use of operatic structures in the *Sirens* chapter of *Ulysses*.⁵⁸ Matthew Hodgart and Mabel Worthington, and more extensively Zack Bowen, survey the various musical allusions throughout Joyce's work, including in *Finnegans Wake* where Joyce employs references to at least 122 of Moore's 123 *Irish Melodies*.⁵⁹ Carol Loeb Shloss considers Joyce and dance, notably his complex relationship with his daughter, a professional dancer.⁶⁰ Indeed, one might suggest that we know more about how musical culture influenced Joyce's *Ulysses* than about how it has influenced any aspect of nationalist politics.⁶¹

⁵⁵ W. B. Yeats, *Memoirs: Autobiography* (London, 1972), p. 65; W. B. Yeats, *Synge and the Ireland of His Time* (Dundrum, 1911), p. xii; W. B. Yeats, 'Popular Ballad Poetry of Ireland' in W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats Vol. IX: Early Art: Uncollected Articles and Reviews* (New York, 2004), p. 103.

⁵⁶ R. F. Foster, *Words Alone: Yeats and His Inheritances* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 45-90; R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life, Vol. I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914* (Oxford, 1997), p. 418; E. Malins, 'Yeats and Music' in L. Miller (ed.), *The Dolmen Press Yeats Centenary Papers* (Dublin, 1968), p. 485.

⁵⁷ D. Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy: Irish Protestant Histories since 1795* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 60, 73; S. Ellis, *The Plays of W. B. Yeats: Yeats and the Dancer* (Chippenham, 1995).

⁵⁸ H. White, *Music and the Irish Literary Imagination* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 79-109.

⁵⁹ M. Hodgart and M. Worthington, *Song in the Works of James Joyce* (New York, 1959); Z. Bowen, *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry Through Ulysses* (Albany, 1974), pp. 194-197, 214.

⁶⁰ C. L. Shloss, *Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake* (New York, 2004), p. 172.

⁶¹ Z. Bowen, *Bloom's Old Sweet Song: Essays on Joyce and Music* (Gainesville, 1995).

There are numerous single-issue studies suggesting the need for a broader political history of musical culture's relationship with nationalism. These include biographies of individual composers, songwriters, performers, choreographers and dancers. For example, Fearghal McGarry writes about Peadar Kearney, who penned Ireland's national anthem and was extensively immersed in nationalist politics.⁶² Joseph Cunningham and Ruth Fleischmann consider German-born composer Aloys Fleischmann and his role in the musical culture of early twentieth-century Cork, while Séamus de Barra examines Fleischmann's son and namesake, including his nationalist influences.⁶³ Bernard Harris and Grattan Freyer celebrate mid-twentieth century composer Seán Ó Riada's 'achievement' of integrating folk tunes and art music, while David Cooper analyses Ó Riada's soundtracks for documentary films on nationalist and historical themes.⁶⁴ John Glatt details the career of the 'traditional' group, The Chieftains.⁶⁵ Ruth Fleischmann's collections of essays and reminiscences on choreographer Joan Denise Moriarty indicate the influence of 'traditional' dancing on Moriarty's ballets.⁶⁶ Victoria O'Brien similarly highlights the performance of 'Irish' ballets by a succession of Dublin-based companies.⁶⁷ Others explore musical culture's role in constructing national identity. Ewan Morris examines the adoption of the national anthem.⁶⁸ Several authors consider the promotion of Irish dancing at the expense of foreign 'jazz', the prevailing consensus on which holds that Church and

⁶² F. McGarry, *The Abbey Rebels of 1916: A Lost Revolution* (Dublin, 2015).

⁶³ J. Cunningham and R. Fleischmann, *Aloys Fleischmann (1880-1964): An Immigrant Musician in Ireland* (Cork, 2010); S. de Barra, *Aloys Fleischmann* (Dublin, 2006).

⁶⁴ B. Harris and G. Freyer (eds.), *Integrating Tradition: The Achievement of Seán Ó Riada* (Sligo, 1981); D. Cooper, 'Seán Ó Riada and Irish Post-Colonial Film Music: George Morrison's *Mise Éire*' in M. Mera and D. Burnand (eds.), *European Film Music* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 100-115.

⁶⁵ J. Glatt, *The Chieftains: The Authorised Biography* (London, 1997).

⁶⁶ R. Fleischmann, *Joan Denise Moriarty: Founder of Irish National Ballet* (Dublin, 1998); R. Fleischmann, *Joan Denise Moriarty: Ireland's First Lady of Dance* (Cork, 2012).

⁶⁷ V. O'Brien, *A History of Irish Ballet from 1927 to 1963* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 54, 67, 102.

⁶⁸ E. Morris, *Our Own Devices: National Symbols and Political Conflict in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2003).

State acted in tandem in a regime of censorship; this narrative requires revision.⁶⁹ Frank Whelan and Helen Brennan examine dance in the Gaelic League, the language revival organisation, ascribing its policies to Anglophobia (perhaps too readily).⁷⁰ Sharon Phelan's periodisation of Irish dance history into various stages of a colonial relationship with Britain similarly presumes, problematically, the existence of an English/Irish dichotomy.⁷¹ Edward O'Henry and Gerry Smyth position Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the traditional music organisation, as part of an ongoing, consistent 'nationalist agenda'.⁷² This too is questionable. Rob Strachan and Martin Leonard consider the State's role in promoting music produced in Ireland with a view to understanding national identity.⁷³ Reginald Hall's thesis on the music and dance of Irish populations in London convincingly illustrates an inter-cultural relationship between English and Irish forms, and identifies practices that accompanied political rallies.⁷⁴ These themes also apply in Ireland, as this thesis demonstrates. Lucy Bryson and Clen McCarthy discuss the importance of anthems in Northern Irish politics. However, they consider a much smaller selection of music than the present study.⁷⁵ Although their subject matter lies beyond the remit of this thesis, many studies on Irish musical culture

⁶⁹ J. Smyth, 'Dancing, Depravity and all that Jazz: The Public Dance Halls Act of 1935', *History Ireland* 1 (2) (Summer, 1993), pp. 51-54; D. Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland* (London, 2012), pp. 178-179; E. Hogan, "'Earthly, Sensual, Devilish": Sex, "race" and Jazz in Post-Independence Ireland', *Jazz Research Journal* 4 (1) (May 2010), pp. 57-79; B. O'Connor, *The Irish Dancing: Cultural Politics and Identities 1900-2000* (Cork, 2013); M. Finnane, 'The Carrigan Committee of 1930-1931', *Irish Historical Studies* 32 (128) (Nov. 2001), pp. 519-536; C. Foley, 'Perceptions of Irish Step Dance: National, Global and Local', *Dance Research Journal* 33 (1) (Summer, 2001), pp. 34-45.

⁷⁰ Brennan, *Story*, p. 32; Whelan, *Complete*, p. 20.

⁷¹ S. Phelan, *Dance in Ireland: Steps, Stages and Stories* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2014).

⁷² E. O'Henry, 'Institutions for the Promotion of Indigenous Music: The Case for Ireland's Comhaltas', *Ethnomusicology* 33 (1) (Winter, 1989), pp. 67-95; G. Smyth, 'Ireland unplugged: The roots of the Irish Folk/trad (Con)fusion', *Irish Studies Review* 12 (1) (2004), p. 90.

⁷³ R. Strachan and M. Leonard, 'A Musical Nation: Protection, Investment and Branding in the Irish Music Industry', *Irish Studies Review* 12 (1) (2004), pp. 39-49.

⁷⁴ R. Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London, 1890-1970: A Socio-Cultural History' (PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 1994), pp. 44-87.

⁷⁵ C. McCarthy and L. Bryson, *Clashing Symbols: A Report on the Use of Flags, Anthems and other National Symbols in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1994), pp. 48-52.

since 1972 highlight that concepts of Irishness have inflected the output of particular artists.⁷⁶ Perhaps the most successful studies of Irish music have been those on memory by Guy Beiner, Maura Cronin and Henry Glassie.⁷⁷ Beiner identifies folksong as part of a 'communal discourse', whereby a 'multitude of traditions coexisted and also competed against each other for primacy and recognition' in perceptions of the 1798 rebellion.⁷⁸ The way in which different songs and their different versions constituted a negotiation between competing perceptions in memory is suggestive for this study in that it implies similar processes in the formation of political ideologies.⁷⁹ Existing scholarship, therefore, highlights the political and intellectual relationship between Irish nationhood and musical culture. Taken in isolation, many of these works exaggerate or misread the significance of their subjects. Unlike this patchwork of individual studies, the present work's overarching, long-term investigation more effectively contextualises and quantifies the significance of musical culture's relationship with nationalism.

There exists an extensive body of scholarship on Moore and Young Ireland, but less on musical culture's influence on popular politics after 1848.⁸⁰ The most concerted effort to address music's political role is that of Georges-Denis Zimmermann. Zimmermann presents a range of nineteenth-century songs, demonstrating their origins, recurring

⁷⁶ G. Smyth, *Noisy Island: A Short History of Irish Music* (Cork, 2005); N. McLaughlin and M. McLoone, 'Hybridity and National Musics: The Case of Irish Rock Music', *Popular Music* 19 (2) (Apr. 2000), pp. 181-199; M. McLoone, 'Punk Music in Northern Ireland: The Potential Power of "what might have been"', *Irish Studies Review* 12 (1) (2004), pp. 29-38; McCann, 'Music and Politics'.

⁷⁷ H. Glassie, *Irish Folk History: Folktales from the North* (Dublin, 1982).

⁷⁸ G. Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison, 2007), pp. 11, 23, 86; M. Cronin, 'Memory, Story and Balladry: 1798 and its place in popular memory in pre-Fenian Ireland' in L. Geary (ed.), *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 112-134.

⁷⁹ Beiner, *Remembering*, p. 94.

⁸⁰ Davis, *Young*; Mulvey, *Thomas*; Kelly, *Bard*; T. Brown, 'Music: The Cultural Issue' in R. Pine (ed.), *Music in Ireland, 1848-1998* (Cork, 1998), pp. 37-45; Pine, *Disappointed*; T. Love, 'Irish Nationalism, Print Culture and the Spirit of the Nation', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* (Feb. 2017), pp. 1-20.

themes and characters.⁸¹ Unlike the present work, however, his source material rarely ventures beyond the songs themselves, restricting his comments on politics to speculation. 'There is no doubt,' he writes, 'that the Memory of the Dead, God Save Ireland, A Soldier's Song, A Nation Once Again and Step Together, had contributed to create the spirit of martial enthusiasm which sustained the volunteers since 1913'.⁸² Music may have had such effects, but his assertions remain unsubstantiated. His account also ceases in 1900, leaving swathes of material unexplored, not least that relating to the revolutionary period (1916-1923). Eimear Whitfield addresses the revolution, arguing that music boosted IRA morale, celebrated their achievements and placed their cause in the context of a longer struggle.⁸³ However, her analysis relies heavily upon retrospective accounts. The result is a series of triumphalist conclusions, implying music was a consistent, unequivocal force for unity and resistance.⁸⁴ Terry Moylan's *The Indignant Muse* engages with the same period. Moylan collects hundreds of songs, but only speculates on their political role. Even then, his claims are misleading, namely his assertion that there were no pro-Treaty songs during the Civil War (1922-1923).⁸⁵ Maura Murphy demonstrates the value of using sources beyond music in her survey of Dublin Castle's responses to nineteenth-century nationalist balladry. She highlights two periods of peak concern in the 1840s and 1860s.⁸⁶ John Borgonovo's use of newspapers to analyse the politics of brass bands in Cork is similarly suggestive of the value of contextual sources.⁸⁷ By incorporating a wider range of source material, similar to but

⁸¹ Zimmermann, *Songs*, pp. 16-33, 38, 62, 77, 93-97.

⁸² G. Zimmermann, 'On Rebel Songs', *Ceol: A Journal of Irish Music* 2 (4) (1967-8), p. 89.

⁸³ E. Whitfield, 'Another Martyr For Old Ireland: The Balladry of Revolution' in D. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 61-64.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 64.

⁸⁵ T. Moylan, *The Indignant Muse: Poetry and Songs of the Irish Revolution 1887-1926* (Dublin, 2016), p. xvii.

⁸⁶ M. Murphy, 'The Ballad Singer and the Role of the Seditious Ballad in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Dublin Castle's View', *Ulster Folklife* 25 (1979), pp. 98-99.

⁸⁷ J. Borgonovo, 'Politics as Leisure: Brass Bands in Cork, 1845-1918' in L. Lane and W. Murphy (eds.) *Leisure and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool, 2016), pp. 23-40.

much more extensively than Borgonovo and Murphy, this thesis problematises speculative, triumphalist narratives like that of Moylan.

Unionist musical culture's historiography requires similar expansion, contextualisation, and qualification. Zimmermann's analysis of unionist music is limited to a few pages of purely textual analysis.⁸⁸ The politicised historiography of the Orange Order and its parades, moreover, presents obstacles. Marxist interpretations of Orange history, sympathetic to Irish Republicanism, held that from its beginnings the Order was a counter-revolutionary opiate through which the ruling class cultivated a unionist movement, funded anti-nationalist paramilitaries, and maintained economic power.⁸⁹ These theories problematically assume that the natural identity of the Protestant working-class is Irish, not British, and based primarily on class, not religion. Austen Morgan's observation that such narratives relied on 'Republican spectacles' is instructive.⁹⁰ If revisionism in an Irish context is defined by more sophisticated historical approaches then, as Richard English observes, its application is not limited to nationalism.⁹¹ Recent studies question notions of a unionist 'conspiracy' controlled by industrialists and seek to understand unionists as an identity group in their own right.⁹² What is clear is that far from a carefully controlled vehicle for directing the masses,

⁸⁸ Zimmermann, *Songs*, pp. 295-300.

⁸⁹ D. Boulton, *The UVF 1966-73: An Anatomy of Loyalist Rebellion* (Dublin, 1973), pp. 15-27, 40, 115, 184-188; G. Bell, *The Protestants of Ulster* (London, 1976), pp. 4, 40, 55-56, 94, 129; T. Gray, *The Orange Order* (London, 1972), pp. 188-190, 280.

⁹⁰ A. Morgan, *Labour and Partition* (London, 1991), p. xvi.

⁹¹ R. English, 'The Same People with Different Relatives? Modern Scholarship, Unionists and the Irish Nation' in R. English and G. Walker (eds.), *Unionism in Modern Ireland: New Perspectives on Politics and Culture* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 222.

⁹² P. Gibbon, *The Origins of Ulster Unionism: The Formation of Popular Protestant Politics and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Manchester, 1975), p. 9; D. Miller, *Queen's Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 44-45.

unionist leaders struggled to control populist Orange energies.⁹³ Eric Kaufmann's interpretation of Orange Order history as a long-term balancing act between respectability and populism offers a fruitful framework.⁹⁴ While revisionist interpretations have understood Orangeism more effectively, they should not be mistaken for the narratives of celebration or apology that the Order has cultivated itself. In 1964 the Order founded the Orange Lodge of Research, providing self-styled academic narratives that were more sympathetic, combating an 'academic elite' who 'tended to belittle Orangeism'.⁹⁵ Ruth Dudley Edwards' work buys into this narrative uncritically, and is not representative of current thinking on Orange history ('I love the parade, I love the music' she writes).⁹⁶ The counterparts to these narratives are histories that ignore both Orange and academic historiographies and maintain Republican interpretations.⁹⁷ Both these perspectives are unhelpful for understanding Orangeism's appeal. The present study builds upon more nuanced understandings of unionism to explore music's specific relationships with nationalist and unionist ideologies. The extensive historiography on Orangeism alludes to musical culture regularly, but few focus on it specifically.⁹⁸ Bill Rolston's study of songs expressing sectarian frustrations is a notable exception, but only considers the period after the outbreak of the Troubles.⁹⁹ Even fewer attempt a comparative history with nationalism. This thesis provides that

⁹³ H. Patterson, *Class Conflict and Sectarianism: The Protestant Working-Class and the Belfast Labour Movement 1868-1980* (Belfast, 1980), pp. x-xvi, 110-111, 141; A. Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 1, 222; A. Blackstock, "'The Invisible Mass': Loyal Crowds in Mid-Ulster, 1795-1796' in P. Jupp and E. Magennis (eds.), *Crowds in Ireland c. 1720-1920* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 110.

⁹⁴ E. Kaufmann, *The Orange Order: A Contemporary Northern Ireland History* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 4-21, 49.

⁹⁵ A. McClelland, *William Johnston of Ballykilbeg* (Lurgan, 1990), pp. ii-v.

⁹⁶ R. Dudley Edwards, *The Faithful Tribe: An Intimate Portrait of the Loyal Institutions* (London, 1999), p. 7.

⁹⁷ E. Moloney and A. Pollak, *Paisley* (Dublin, 1986), pp. 90-91, 159; M. Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: The Formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary 1920-1927* (London, 1983), pp. 2-3.

⁹⁸ E.g. N. Jarman, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (London, 1997).

⁹⁹ B. Rolston, 'Music and Politics in Ireland: The Case of Loyalism' in J. Harrington and E. Mitchel (eds.), *Politics and Performance in Contemporary Northern Ireland* (Amherst, 1999), pp. 29-56.

comparison, highlighting cultural material common to both traditions and explaining why unionism provided such a tenacious counterpoint to nationalism. It provides a long-term study of unionist musical culture and, unlike histories of parading, does not focus exclusively on the Orange Order.

This thesis investigates how political and cultural nationalists employed musical culture between 1848 and 1972. Unlike orthodox musicological approaches that dismiss much of that culture as irrelevant, this thesis draws on recent innovations in history, ethnomusicology, and ‘new’ musicology.¹⁰⁰ Where White constructs his analysis around the specific category of ‘art music’, these disciplines question the usefulness of such distinctions.¹⁰¹ As Bruno Nettl writes, ethnomusicologists study ‘anything that anyone says is music’.¹⁰² Rather than compositional technicalities and artistic merit, an ethnomusicological approach would, in Frederic Lieberman’s words, explain ‘the social, political and economic functions in which musical life is embedded’.¹⁰³ Explaining this approach most succinctly, Charles Seeger asks: ‘Who did the singing? Where was the singing done? Why was the singing done?’.¹⁰⁴ Those who study musical culture must, therefore, consider its historical context in order to understand how it was affected by events and historical actors, and vice versa.¹⁰⁵ Different cultures have different musical grammars, and specific motifs and devices have different meanings depending upon their individual soundscape (the place that sounds construct and with

¹⁰⁰ N. Gregor, ‘Why Does Music Matter?’, *German History* 34 (1) (2016), p. 114.

¹⁰¹ M. Gelbart, *The Invention of Folk Music and Art Music* (Cambridge, 2007).

¹⁰² B. Nettl, *Nettl’s Elephant: On the History of Ethnomusicology* (Chicago, 2010), p. 114.

¹⁰³ F. Lieberman, ‘Should Ethnomusicology be Abolished?: Position Papers for the Ethnomusicology Interest Group at the 19th Annual Meeting of the College Music Society, Washington D.C., November, 1976’, *College Music Symposium* 17 (2) (Fall, 1977), p. 204.

¹⁰⁴ H. Kingsbury, ‘Should Ethnomusicology be Abolished? (Reprise)’, *Ethnomusicology* 41 (2) (Spring-Summer, 1997), pp. 243-249.

¹⁰⁵ Kingsbury, ‘Should Ethnomusicology be Abolished? (Reprise)’, pp. 200-203.

which they are associated).¹⁰⁶ Moreover, considering the performance rituals of particular societies and music's extra-musical functions provides for a better understanding of the 'cultural systems in which the music is created' and the 'spaces in which music is experienced'.¹⁰⁷ A fruitful example of the value of such methods for historical study is Stephen Blum, Philip Bohlman and Daniel Neuman's *Ethnomusicology and Modern History*. Blum et al provide several examples of how musical culture and individual actors ('brokers') may affect and be affected by historical events.¹⁰⁸ This thesis applies these ideas to political history, in turn explaining how nationalist and unionist movements presented themselves, constructed ideologies and maintained social cohesion.

Moreover, while scholars of Ireland have engaged with territoriality in the sense of unionist parades, music's role in shaping political spaces has been overlooked.¹⁰⁹ Thus, this thesis also draws upon methodological developments relating to music and space. As Henri Lefebvre argues, space is an imagined social construct. Boundaries such as walls provide superficial divisions between spaces, reinforced by the symbolic value that a culture assigns to such partitions.¹¹⁰ Sound is one means through which cultures perceive and understand those spaces.¹¹¹ Music (played, sung or broadcast) can both defy and reinforce the divisions between public and private spaces, or between the

¹⁰⁶ J. Blacking, *Music, Culture and Experience* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 50-55; K. Kauffman Shelemay, *Soundscapes: Explaining Music in a Changing World* (London, 2001), p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ Blacking, *Music*, pp. 12, 32; S. Whiteley, 'Introduction' in S. Whiteley, A. Bennett and S. Hawkins (eds.), *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ S. Blum, 'Prologue' in S. Blum, P. Bohlman, and D. Neuman (eds.), *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 1-14.

¹⁰⁹ H. Patterson and E. Kaufmann, *Unionism and Orangeism in Northern Ireland Since 1945: The Decline of the Loyal Family* (Manchester, 2007), p. 31.

¹¹⁰ H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 28-38, 87.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 225.

territories of opposing political groups.¹¹² As George Revill writes, music is vital in disputes over the meanings that societies ascribe to particular spaces. Music crosses walls unhindered, carrying unauthorised sound and undermining the culturally ascribed meaning of the space beyond.¹¹³ Recording and broadcasting allow music to travel even further, faster, and more subversively.¹¹⁴ In Ireland, there were many contested spaces in which unauthorised music was politically potent.

The conventional ethnomusicological approach would be to engage in fieldwork: embedding oneself within a musical culture, conversing with participants and interviewing performers.¹¹⁵ For historians, where the cultures studied are by necessity of the past, this approach presents problems. It is possible to interview participants of more recent musical cultures, but outside their original context. The questions, interviewer and chronological proximity to events all shape the interviewee's statement.¹¹⁶ Beyond living memory, there are more serious issues. In Paul Thompson's words 'we cannot, alas, interview tombstones'.¹¹⁷ It therefore becomes necessary to rely on the efforts of others. Fortunately, there is ample material with which to proceed, but each collection involves new collectors and new problems. Written memoirs, of which use is made in this study, share many similarities (A. J. P. Taylor calls them 'a form of oral history set

¹¹² G. Born, 'Introduction – music, sound and space: transformations of public and private experience' in G. Born, *Music, Sound and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 24.

¹¹³ G. Revill, 'Music and the Politics of Sound: Nationalism, Citizenship and Auditory Space', *Society and Space* 18 (2000), p. 601.

¹¹⁴ A. Leyshon, D. Matless, and G. Revill 'Music, Space and the Production of Place' in A. Leyshon, D. Matless, and G. Revill (eds.), *The Place of Music* (London, 1998), p. 2.

¹¹⁵ T. Cooley, 'Casting Shadows in the Field: An Introduction' in G. Barz and T. Cooley (eds.), *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 3-19.

¹¹⁶ M. Quinlan, 'The Dynamics of Interviewing' in D. Ritchie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 28-32; P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 1978), p. 119; M. Roper, 'Analysing the Analysed: Transference and Counter-Transference in the Oral History Encounter', *Oral History* 31 (2) (2003), pp. 20-32.

¹¹⁷ Thompson, *Voice*, p. 4.

down to mislead historians’).¹¹⁸ Retrospective accounts, oral or written, allow historical actors to enhance, downplay or falsify their role, and should thus be approached sceptically.

Historians beyond Ireland, in what has been labelled a 'cultural turn', have demonstrated the value of historical, ethnomusicological or ‘new’ musicological approaches to music.¹¹⁹ Historical perspectives provide context and qualification where musical culture’s political value might otherwise be exaggerated or distorted. Beale Kutschke and Barley Norton’s *Music and Protest in 1968* explores music in the transnational ‘long 1968’ protests and examines the paradox whereby protest music simultaneously achieved global recognition but registered almost total failure in its political objectives.¹²⁰ In her analysis of music during the Holocaust, Shirli Gilbert combines surviving documents and interviews with Holocaust survivors. She demonstrates that for resistance groups, songs contained 'uplifting, encouraging messages' that inspired defiance, but for the majority of Jews in ghettos and concentration camps, music was a 'medium through which narratives of understanding and response to the events were constructed', commemorating the dead, providing reminders of home, and comforting children.¹²¹ Similarly, her work on apartheid combines interviews and documentation to understand how music inspired support for the anti-apartheid movement outside South Africa.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Thompson, *Voice*, p. 94.

¹¹⁹ P. Burke, 'History and Folklore: A Historiographical Survey', *Folklore* 115 (2) (Aug. 2004), p. 137.

¹²⁰ B. Kutschke and B. Norton (eds.), *Music and Protest in 1968* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 5-9.

¹²¹ S. Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 8-16, 41.

¹²² S. Gilbert, 'Singing Against Apartheid: ANC Cultural Groups and the International Anti-Apartheid Struggle', *Journal of African Studies* 33 (2) (Jun. 2007), p. 423.

This thesis consists of six chapters, each of which is sub-divided into sections. Chapter One addresses music and nationalism between 1848 and the formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913. Its three sections cover revolutionary Republicanism, constitutional nationalism, and cultural revival. Chapter Two addresses music during the revolutionary period from the formation of the Volunteers to the end of the Civil War in 1923. Its first section considers music's role in nationalist politics until 1923; the second explores the British State's response. The third considers music and politics during the Civil War. Chapter Three covers music in independent Ireland after 1923 until 1972. It is organised into two sections, the first on party politics, and the second on the various strands of cultural nationalist music. Chapter Four considers nationalist music and Northern Ireland after partition. It consists of three chronological sections. The first looks at music and nationalist politics between partition and the start of the civil rights movement. The second examines the musical influences that characterised civil rights protests before the outbreak of widespread violence in 1969. The third analyses how music helped Republicans to cultivate a movement capable of sustaining a military campaign. Chapter Five covers dance. Dance interacts with music through the art of the body. In public discourse, the body was often an instrument of personal morality and, consequently, national wellbeing. Pursuing, defining and disciplining dance was therefore a matter of considerable concern in nationalist circles. The first of the chapter's three sections covers the invention of Irish dancing after 1848 until the end of the Civil War in 1923. The second considers how dance contributed (or did not contribute) to a State-building project between 1923 and the passing of the Public Dance Halls Act in 1935. The latter looms large in the historiography of the period as a nationalistic act of censorship, a narrative that this section problematises. The final section argues that traditional 'Irish' dancing diversified after 1935. Chapter Six compares nationalist and

unionist musical cultures across the whole period. Its first section argues that unionist musical culture between 1848 and 1921 epitomised nationalism's inability to attract Protestant support. Its second section argues that unionist musical culture between the establishment of devolved Northern Irish government in 1921 and its suspension in 1972 provides an ideal prism through which to trace the development of both nationalist and unionist grievances.

The thesis draws upon three categories of source material: retrospective accounts (written and oral), contemporary documents, and the media. The first oral history collection this work employs is the Irish Folklore Collection. Created in 1935, with fieldwork conducted by a combination of professional ethnographers and amateur enthusiasts, the collection aimed to preserve what was perceived to be a dying folk culture. It includes lyrics and detailed descriptions of how interviewees encountered songs. Songs were often transmitted over generations, and so may have been altered over time, as well as through the interpretation of the collector. Nevertheless, collectors were instructed to transcribe conversations unaltered, and there is little reason to believe that the transcriptions are unrepresentative.¹²³ Indeed, that collectors were largely insiders in the communities they researched means that interviewees were more willing to recount stories, mitigating the problematic issue of the 'other' that is a constant concern of oral historians.¹²⁴

The second collection is the Bureau of Military History, established in 1947 to amass

¹²³ Beiner, *Remembering*, pp. 38-54.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 39.

statements (1,773 were compiled) from participants in the Easter Rising and Anglo-Irish War.¹²⁵ As a source on the revolution, particularly since their digitisation, they are incomparable in their potential for detailed, targeted research.¹²⁶ However, they should be treated carefully. The temptation to exaggerate and distort one's role in national struggle is evident in numerous cases, witnesses had the opportunity to edit and alter their statements, and the length and precision of several suggests that the individuals concerned intended to publish them as memoirs.¹²⁷ The statements do not record the interviewers' notes, questions, nor any other input that they had. Participants also adhered to the 1921 cut-off stringently, meaning that they rarely comment on the Civil War.¹²⁸ As Eve Morrison argues, their evidence is still valuable, and outright liars are rare, but one should maintain a healthy scepticism.¹²⁹ Ernie O'Malley's interviews partially fill the Civil War gap.¹³⁰ O'Malley was an IRA officer during the Anglo-Irish war and opposed the Treaty with Britain.¹³¹ His interviews have a greater military focus, with less detail about cultural activities, but they are valuable nonetheless.¹³² Material on Republican paramilitaries after 1923 is less abundant, with the notable exception of journalist Uinseann MacEoin's interviews with Republican activists and IRA members. MacEoin was a Republican activist, with minor IRA involvement, and his published interviews do not indicate to what extent they were edited or revised. Nevertheless, they

¹²⁵ R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London, 2014), p. 306.

¹²⁶ 'Guide to the Bureau of Military History' <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/about.html> (15th Jan. 2015).

¹²⁷ Foster, *Vivid*, p. 309; E. Morrison, 'The Bureau of Military History and Ernie O'Malley – Remembering Rebellion and Civil War' (Unpublished paper, 22nd Oct. 2014, Seminar in Irish History, Hertford College).

¹²⁸ Foster, *Vivid*, p. 307.

¹²⁹ E. Morrison, 'Bureau of Military History Witness Statements as Sources for the Irish Revolution', http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/files/Bureau_of_Military_witness_statements%20as_sources%20of_the_Irish%20Revolution.pdf (28th May 2017), pp. 7-9.

¹³⁰ Morrison, 'Ernie O'Malley'.

¹³¹ E. O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Dublin, 1979).

¹³² E. O'Malley, *The Men Will Talk to Me* (Cork, 2012).

provide useful details on Republican culture.¹³³ Finally, this thesis also employs a small number of interviews by the present author, some of which were off-the-record and so are not cited directly, although their statements inform the overall approach. As with oral histories conducted by others, witnesses may have present agendas and unrepresentative experiences, but their evidence points to important themes.

This thesis primarily employs contemporary documents. These include songbooks, ballad sheets, recordings, and concert programmes. Here, there is a need to be cautious about whether songs that were printed were widely sung, particularly where they appear once but are not published again. This study also considers the papers and publications of cultural organisations, including Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the Gaelic League, Orange Order, Gaelic Athletic Association, and BBC. To contextualise this material more effectively than in previous studies, this thesis employs material that has been used extensively in political history, but rarely for histories of music. This includes government papers, which illustrate the extent to which subversive musical cultures actually subverted the relevant political oppressor, as well as how governments used musical culture themselves. The British and Irish Governments have not yet released many potentially relevant documents, particularly for the period of the Troubles. While this restricts the available information in certain examples, the quantity of material is still significant. The papers of political parties are also consulted, notably Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, whose archives contain extensive and unexplored detail on musical culture. The letters and diaries of activists provide further detail, notably on the influence of political musical culture on individuals. Unlike retrospective accounts, these documents

¹³³ U. MacEoin, *The IRA in the Twilight Years* (Dublin, 1997); U. MacEoin, *Survivors* (Dublin, 1987).

do not suffer from hindsight. While letters undoubtedly have an ‘audience’, there is less incentive to bolster one's actions as there might be in published memoirs. The same may be said of the records of societies and organisations. In all these instances, the texts are largely characterised either by their bland reporting of events, or by their personal nature. In addition, the print and broadcast media provide vital sources by which to measure propagandist music's impact. The most successful propaganda attracts attention. High volumes of press reporting would indicate that a musical performance garnered considerable attention. Nonetheless, newspapers needed to appeal to a paying audience, or to their controlling political interests, and these factors must also be considered.

Two distinctions must be made regarding the songs and dances explored. The first relates to genre. Where other studies limit themselves to ‘classical’ or ‘folk’ music, for the purposes of this thesis genre is less important than subject matter. Where a song relates to nationalism or nationhood, it is of interest. Given the politicisation of ballads, these form the bulk of the music considered, but that is not to say that because a love song is printed on a ballad sheet that it is relevant. Nor does it preclude examination of ‘art music’ composers, many of whom this thesis considers. The same applies to dance. If Gaelic League members preferred a waltz to a hornpipe, it is important to understand why. The second relates to distinctions between music and poetry. While this may seem a simple contrast, the terms are so often used interchangeably that explanation is necessary.¹³⁴ For Thomas Moore, the distinction was important. He insisted that his melodies be treated as songs and not poems, and it was several years before he

¹³⁴ See P. Kearney, *The Soldier's Song and Other Poems* (Dublin, 1928), a collection of songs, or T. MacSwiney, *The Music of Freedom* (Dublin, 1907), a collection of poems.

consented to their being published without accompanying music.¹³⁵ As such, where verses were sung or intended to be sung, they are treated as songs. Where poems are influenced by music, for example in the use of language from popular songs, they may be commented upon, but poetry is not relevant by virtue of using ‘song’ or ‘music’ as a synonym for poetry.

A final consideration is the increasing importance of commercialism in creating and disseminating music. Ballad singers, songwriters, journalists, and professional recording artists were all subject to and conscious of the market. For Marxist scholars such as Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School, commercial interests are sufficient proof that all popular culture only distracts the masses from political self-awareness. They argue, therefore, that popular culture has no political significance where the artist’s interest lies in commercial success.¹³⁶ This is questionable. As John Hutchinson notes in a British context, locales with the most developed mass commercial cultures were by no measure the most politically subdued.¹³⁷ While one must account for potential conflicts between political and commercial interests, the people are not ‘cultural dupes’ simply because their culture reinforces ‘capitalist cultural industries’.¹³⁸ If anything, the public’s willingness to pay for access to musical culture demonstrates the extent of their interest.¹³⁹ In many instances political music’s commercial value actually enhanced the activities of political groups and cultural revivalists. As Simon Frith notes, local

¹³⁵ Moore, *Letters*, p. xviii.

¹³⁶ M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford, 2002), p. 97.

¹³⁷ Quoted in G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 87.

¹³⁸ J. Fiske ‘The Popular Economy’ in J. Storey (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (London, 2009), p. 564.

¹³⁹ R. Adlington, ‘Expressive Revolutions: “1968” and music in the Netherlands’ in B. Kutschke and B. Norton (eds.), *Music and Protest in 1968* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 19.

traditional music has only survived globalisation by constantly innovating in form and commercial strategy.¹⁴⁰

Overall, this study provides the first comprehensive political history of music and Irish nationhood. By incorporating a wider range of source material, particularly that generated by political groups, it problematises the assumptions underlying previous studies about music's relationship with political activism and government. It similarly questions distinctions between traditional, modern, artistic and popular culture. Finally, it demonstrates that music is an ideal medium through which to understand the various contradictory ways in which the spirit of the Irish nation has been imagined, cultivated and challenged.

¹⁴⁰ S. Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 155.

1

Music and Nationalism, 1848-1913: A Varied Soundscape¹

I

‘Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall?’: Music, Fenianism and Radical Nationalism

After 1848, the remnants of Young Ireland and the Irish Confederacy were scattered, either through deportation or self-imposed exile, but a number of the 1848 rebels went on to establish the ‘Fenian’ movement. Fenians supported the achievement of an Irish Republic by force, a goal they pursued through two organisations founded in 1858: the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in Ireland, and Clan na Gael in America. The IRB was a secret, oath bound society, organised into ‘circles’, whereby the leading (‘centre’) figure was only known to a small number of immediate deputies. It had over 50,000 members by 1864. Clan na Gael, meanwhile, sought financial support and military expertise from Irish-Americans. The planned rebellion was repeatedly delayed.² By its instigation in 1867, 1,100 IRB members had been arrested.³ In Manchester, Fenians attempting to rescue prisoners killed a police officer, and three were executed (the ‘Manchester Martyrs’). Unsurprisingly, the rebellion was short-lived and did not inspire a general uprising. In subsequent years, radical Republicans (seeking an immediate, fully independent Republic) and constitutional nationalists (content with devolution or a

¹ Chapters One and Two reproduce, considerably revised, material submitted for R. Parfitt, *Music, Nationalism and Unionism in Ireland, 1848-1921* (MSt Thesis, University of Oxford, 2013). An early version of this chapter appeared in R. Parfitt, ‘Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall?’: music and Irish nationalism, 1848-1913’, *Irish Studies Review* 23 (4) (Nov. 2015).

² A. Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 93-102.

³ R. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context* (Dublin, 1985), p. 240.

gradual route to independence) cooperated, agitating for land reform and devolved government by combining parliamentary campaigns with agrarian violence. In their music, Fenians used older songs and their own compositions. This chapter analyses the context and content of nationalist music, and asks how songs were received, employed and performed by political actors.

Nationalist song was the product of a varied soundscape. Nineteenth-century Irish audiences experienced music as a community event, heard or performed in large congregations with shared interests. Dublin theatres provided audiences for art music, particularly ballad operas (combining traditional and operatic songs, also popular in Britain), reflected in the establishment of a conservatoire in the city in 1848. However, largely speaking art music infrastructure was lacking.⁴ Cork hosted Ireland's only university post for music. Consequently, the port city became a fledgling cultural centre, encouraged by the presence of numerous European migrants with more substantial musical training.⁵ Catholic Church music had a larger audience. Mass predominantly consisted of hymns sung by small choirs or solo singers, accompanied by an organist. Ideally, these singers performed plainchant (characterised by monophonic, unaccompanied melodic lines), although a campaign to improve its quality had limited impact.⁶ These performances, often in Latin without congregational participation, were not especially rousing.⁷ However, they did encourage the perception that musical

⁴ Zuk, 'Words for Music Perhaps?', pp. 14-15; M. McCarthy, *Passing it On: the Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1999), p. 47; J. Allen, 'Italian Opera in Dublin' in R. Pine (ed.), *Music in Ireland 1848-1998* (Cork, 1998), pp. 58-60; R. Johnston, 'Concert Auditoria in Nineteenth-Century Belfast' in M. Murphy and J. Smaczny (eds.), *Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 234-251.

⁵ De Barra, *Fleischmann*, p. 12; K. Daly, *Catholic Church Music in Ireland, 1878-1903: The Cecilian Reform Movement* (Blackrock, 1995), p. 51.

⁶ Daly, *Catholic*, p. 55.

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 103, 140.

performances defined the cultural allegiance of communal gatherings. They also ensured that Catholic and Protestant cultural experiences differed, albeit marginally; the latter's church music was more militant.⁸ Choirs at independent, Catholic-run Christian Brothers Schools had a more varied repertoire, including hymns and popular songs.⁹ In government-funded national schools, music education was limited, and largely focused on European music (and 'God Save the Queen') rather than 'Irish' forms (although they did teach Moore's *Melodies*).¹⁰ For concerts, schools employed pianos.¹¹ By the mid-nineteenth century, the piano was still a luxury item, but it was common in communal musical performance, even if older, cheaper and narrower iterations were often preferred.¹² On the one hand, the upper classes habitually kept pianos in their drawing rooms to entertain guests.¹³ On the other, pianos were common in pubs frequented by the less wealthy, evidenced in piano adverts targeting pub landlords and in their inclusion in the inventories of pubs listed for auction.¹⁴ Parades provided perhaps the most striking public performances. Army bands paraded publicly, especially in cities such as Belfast where they were garrisoned, playing patriotic marching songs.¹⁵ Their fife and drum bands were particularly suited to marching; the 'shrill timbre' of the fifes carried effectively and created an imposing presence, leading the army to make special provision for the bands in its regulations.¹⁶ Bands also played at military and State funerals, such as that for the Duke of Wellington in 1852. On these occasions, bands

⁸ Chapter Six explores Protestant hymns in more depth. McCarthy, *Passing*, p. 66; Ó Laoire, 'Irish Music', p. 273; Johnston, 'Concert', p. 244.

⁹ B. Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland: The Christian Brothers and the Development of Irish Nationalism 1838-1921* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 196-197.

¹⁰ McCarthy, *Passing*, pp. 57-59.

¹¹ *Freeman's Journal* (henceforth *Freeman's*), 6th Jan. 1870; *Nation*, 19th Aug. 1865.

¹² C. Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (Oxford, 1990), p. 9.

¹³ McCarthy, *Passing*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁴ *Freeman's*, 26th Aug. 1862; *Freeman's*, 7th Dec. 1870.

¹⁵ *Belfast Newsletter* (henceforth *Newsletter*), 2nd Jul. 1848.

¹⁶ T. Herbert and H. Barlow, *Music and the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2013), p. 17.

performed funeral marches alongside two military trumpet calls, the ‘Last Post’ and ‘Reveille’.¹⁷

The most popular musical cultures encouraged audiences to spend money. From the mid-nineteenth century, even workers had increasing time and money for recreation.¹⁸ Temperance societies, founded in Cork in 1838, campaigned for teetotalism, but also produced songs, held concerts, and formed bands, often at great expense to members. Music promoted the organisation, established its territory, and provided social activities (common in societies across Britain, notably insurance-providing friendly societies).¹⁹ They also played at meetings supporting O’Connell and Repeal, contributing to the spectacle of his ‘monster meetings’, an important theme in future movements.²⁰ As noted, ballads also had commercial appeal. Performers, male and female, sung in towns and markets, selling printed copies of their songs.²¹ Recognising their appeal, businesses used ballads in advertisements.²² As this suggests, print culture was important in disseminating music (e.g. the *Nation*). Several national newspapers operated by 1848, and many carried political songs.²³ Music halls were undoubtedly the most popular feature of British urban soundscapes in the second half of the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1840s, targeting urban workers, the halls dominated pre-war

¹⁷ *Cork Examiner* (henceforth *Examiner*), 30th Jun. 1884; *Nenagh Guardian* (henceforth *Nenagh*), 2nd Nov. 1852; *Newsletter*, 2nd Sept. 1895.

¹⁸ R. Comerford, ‘Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid-1860s’, *Irish Historical Studies* 22 (87) (Sept. 1980), p. 246.

¹⁹ P. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity* (Dublin, 2002), pp. 1, 35, 43; E. Malcolm, *‘Ireland Sober, Ireland Free’: Drink and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Syracuse, 1986), p. 133; S. Cordery, *British Friendly Societies, 1750-1914* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 43-44, 82; W. Murphy, ‘Associational Life, Leisure and Identity since 1740’, in E. Biagini and M. Daly (eds.), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 392.

²⁰ Malcolm, ‘Ireland Sober’, p. 129.

²¹ Zimmermann, *Songs*, pp. 15, 29; Allingham, ‘Irish’, pp. 361-368.

²² J. Strachan and C. Nally, *Advertising and Print Culture in Ireland, 1891-1922* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 31.

²³ C. Morash, *A History of the Media in Ireland* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 57, 90.

popular musical culture; in Ireland they were most common in Belfast and Dublin.²⁴

Even the limited number of art music venues subsidised their income with music hall performances.²⁵ *McGlennon's Star Song Book*, the popular British periodical publishing music hall songs, was also printed and sold in Belfast.²⁶ Music hall artistes gained widespread fame, including Ireland's Percy French, who wrote and performed songs, usually comical, including 'Mountains of Mourne' and 'Phil the Fluter's Ball'.²⁷ Music hall performances absorbed commercially viable aspects of existing cultures, including ballads, and predominantly consisted of comic and sentimental songs emphasising satire, audience participation (usually communal singing of the chorus), and elaborately costumed comical characters (top hats, dress suits and monocles were common).²⁸

British music hall performers also played patriotic songs, praising British soldiers and denigrating foreign rivals. The term 'jingoism' referred to this populist patriotism, specifically 'MacDermott's War Song' in which the singer expressed a willingness to go to war with Russia.²⁹ The piano was a staple of such performances, providing memorable tunes, and identifying heroes and villains through uplifting or discordant accompaniment respectively.³⁰ Nationalist songwriters appropriated and harnessed these soundscapes.

Writing nationalist songs was an expression of ideology, but not necessarily a commitment to rebellion. Fenian songwriters all supported nationalist ideals, but some

²⁴ *Newsletter*, 23rd Sept. 1845; *Freeman's*, 28th May 1846.

²⁵ A. Fleischmann, 'Music and Society, 1850-1921', in W. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland. Volume 6, Ireland under the Union, II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2010), p. 513.

²⁶ *McGlennon's Star Song Book* (Jul. 1888); Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 229.

²⁷ BBC Written Archive Centre (henceforth BBCWAC), 'Percy French Programmes, 1940-1963', NI4/153/1.

²⁸ J. Bratton, 'The Music Hall' in K. Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 164-169.

²⁹ Bratton, 'Music Hall', p. 171; G. Hunt, *MacDermott's War Song* (London, 1853).

³⁰ *Freeman's*, 16th Feb. 1852; Hunt, *MacDermott's*.

expressed those ideals in song as a substitute for fighting. Charles Kickham, who penned songs such as ‘Rory of the Hill’, worked briefly for the *Nation* and participated in the 1848 rebellion.³¹ Kickham’s biographer, the journalist Richard John Kelly, wrote that Kickham read the *Nation* avidly in his youth and joined the IRB in 1863.³² Kickham wrote songs and propaganda for Fenian newspapers, and was jailed alongside high-profile Fenian Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa in 1865 for his efforts.³³ John Keegan Casey (pseudonym ‘Leo’) was similarly dedicated. He described his songs as ‘national in thought and tendency’.³⁴ According to the Fenian Mark Ryan, Casey was the ‘centre’ of the Castlerea IRB.³⁵ After the 1867 uprising, he was imprisoned. Upon leaving he joined the Amnesty Association, which campaigned for the release of Fenian prisoners.³⁶ Timothy Daniel Sullivan, who wrote the iconic ‘God Save Ireland’, had more varied Fenian credentials. Sullivan began his musical career in a Temperance band and claimed that he learned ‘love of country’ from his parents.³⁷ When the Sullivans took over a revived *Nation*, however, their support for Fenianism was mixed. Sullivan claimed to support Fenianism and disagreed with those who argued that it was never a formidable threat, but he also openly criticised the IRB and had no involvement in the 1867 uprising.³⁸ Fenians including John Devoy even stated that there was a ‘feud’ between the IRB and the Sullivans over the way in which the *Nation* reported on the movement.³⁹ Most nationalist songwriters, therefore, were committed Fenians, and all

³¹ R. Comerford, *Charles J. Kickham; A Biography* (Portmarnock, 1979), p. 18; J. Stephens, *Personal Recollections of '48* (n.p., n.d.), p. 10.

³² R. J. Kelly, *Charles J. Kickham: A Memoir* (Dublin, 1914), p. 16.

³³ J. O’Donovan Rossa, *My Years in English Jails* (Tralee, 1967), p. 80.

³⁴ J. K. Casey, *The Rising of the Moon and Other Ballads, Songs and Legends* (Dublin, 1933), p. 4.

³⁵ M. Ryan, *Fenian Memories* (Dublin, 1945), p. 37.

³⁶ *Freeman’s*, 21st Mar. 1870; S. McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners, 1848-1922: Theatres of War* (London, 2005), p. 218.

³⁷ T. D. Sullivan, *A. M. Sullivan: A Memoir* (Dublin, 1885), p. 2.

³⁸ J. Quinn, ‘The IRB an Young Ireland: Varieties of Tension’ in F. McGarry and J. McConnell (eds.), *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2009), p. 12.

³⁹ J. Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* (Dublin, 1969), p. 37; J. O’Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism Vol I* (Shannon, 1969), p. 129.

hypothetically supported separatism. Like the Young Ireland songwriters, however, that did not guarantee a commitment to actual physical resistance.

Before considering how nationalists employed music, it is necessary to understand the range of their repertoire. Categorisation is crude, crossover and exceptions are inevitable, but it is helpful in conveying the various functions of nationalist songs. The first song category may be termed 'laments'. These typically mourned martyred nationalists or bemoaned the effects of British rule. Laments appeared, for instance, on the Manchester Martyrs and the Great Famine. In both instances there was no question that the British, the 'wicked tribe whom God denied', were responsible for sending their Irish victims to 'an early grave'.⁴⁰ 'Lament for the Milesians', by Thomas Davis, is representative. It laments that the 'long battling' Milesians, the pseudo-historical original settlers of Ireland, have been ousted by British 'strangers'. The lyrics praise the Milesians as 'brave men', while the Gaelic refrain mourns 'what a pity there is no heir to their company'. The implication is that the Irish are a brave people, but that the current crop are not of the requisite standard. The accompanying music reinforces that idea. The lyrics in bar one praise the Milesians as 'proud... chieftains of green'. In A-flat major, the piano repeats the tonic chord, reinforcing the emphatic praise. The last word of the line, 'green', is a crotchet, compared to quavers and semi-quavers on those previous, a long, mournful foreshadowing of the bitter refrain. In bar two, the music moves from the tonic to the dominant chord, but instead of reinforcing the praise of the Milesians with the conventional perfect cadence, a deceptive cadence in bar three tonicises F

⁴⁰ NLI, 'A Lamentation', Broadside Ballads Vol. 1 – A, 12B 771; Irish Folklore Collection (Henceforth IFC) 512:420-422.

minor.⁴¹ The more despondent minor key underlines the grieving refrain with similarly sorrowful music. The music and lyrics present listeners with a choice between the Milesians' bravery and the bitterness of there being no 'heir to their company'.⁴²

In common with music hall, humorous or mock-heroic songs often satirised political topics. In an article on street balladry in 1852, poet William Allingham described 'The Irish Emigrant's Address to his Irish Landlord', a song dealing with poverty and emigration. Despite the serious subject matter, the song provides a humorous triumph that undoubtedly appealed to the anti-landlord politics of the singer's audience, as the protagonist leaves Ireland with 'half a year's rent'. The singer thus satirises the landlord's lust for money, no doubt seen as representative of his peers by the rent paying audience.⁴³ 'No Pact with England Make' uses a mock-heroic tone to scorn American President Taft's cooperation with the British government. It casts Taft as the traitor, a stock character of nationalist songs. Set to the air of 'Paddies Evermore', 'No Pact with England Make' mocks Taft as 'daft', and accuses him of having 'scourged' Ireland. In 'Paddies Evermore', the refrain declares 'And hear our echoed chorus still/We're paddies evermore'. The final syllable of 'evermore' falls on a longer note, at the high point of a rising melodic motif beginning on 'We're', and the final tonic of a perfect cadence, indicative of the heroic message.⁴⁴ 'No Pact with England Make', instead, states 'No Taft or Bryce should us entice/By England's side to stand', contrasting Taft's attempts to 'entice' emigrant Irishmen into supporting cooperation with England with

⁴¹ Perfect cadence: A dominant chord progressing to a tonic chord, commonly used to conclude tonic pieces. Deceptive cadence: A resolution to a chord other than the tonic, creating a hanging or suspended feel.

⁴² *Spirit* (1845), pp. 236-239.

⁴³ Allingham, 'Irish', p. 366.

⁴⁴ *Spirit* (1845), pp. 112-115.

an air connoting defiance against them. The juxtaposition of lyrics and music therefore reinforces the satirical message.⁴⁵

Most popular among nationalists was the rousing call to arms. These came in multiple forms. Davis's 'A Nation Once Again' typified the political prophecy. It describes a dream of Ireland free of English rule, the uplifting refrain 'Ireland long a province be/A nation once again' reinforced by a *crescendo*. The major key and performance directions, *forte* (loud), *allegretto* (fast) and *spiritoso* (spirited), amplified that message.⁴⁶ Marching songs similarly called Irishmen to resistance. 'Step Together', first published in the *Nation* in 1843, combined monosyllabic lyrics ('Tread light, left, right') with definitive crotchet beats and a regular rhythm to convey the impression of marching. It proved a popular marching song for nationalists.⁴⁷ 'Rising of the Moon', by John Keegan Casey, described rebels gathering before the 1798 rebellion. It used a similarly definitive and regular metre to convey a marching quality.⁴⁸

John Kells Ingram's 'Memory of the Dead' exemplifies songs celebrating the deeds of nationalist heroes:

Who fears to speak of '98?
 Who blushes at the name?
 When cowards mock the patriot's fate,
 Who hangs his head for shame?
 He's all a knave or half a slave,
 Who slights his country thus,
 But a true man, like you man,
 Will fill your glass with us.

⁴⁵ NLI, John Devoy Papers (henceforth JDP), MS 18,011/1.

⁴⁶ *Spirit* (1845), pp. 272-3.

⁴⁷ *Spirit* (1845), pp. 261-263; *Nation*, 20th May 1843; *Nation*, 9th Dec. 1871.

⁴⁸ Casey, *Rising*, p. 66.

To an extent, Ingram employs mock-heroic elements as he depicts his would-be heroes drinking. Predominantly, however, this conveys a message of masculinity and resistance. The ‘true man’, unlike the ‘knave’, emulates the men of 1798. In bars five and six, addressing the cowards who ‘mock the patriot's fate’, from G major the music tonicises D major. Doing so introduces accidentals, creating dissonance, unpleasant to the ear, reinforcing the pejorative lyrics. In the manner of a music hall singalong, the *sostenuto* (held back) direction preceding ‘But a true man like you man’ allows the performer to pause and the audience to join in. The minimal instrumentation accompanying these lines facilitates their performance as a chorus. Thus, without significant accompaniment all the emphasis falls on a communally expressed call to action.⁴⁹

As ‘The Lament for the Milesians’ and ‘Memory of the Dead’ demonstrate, such music did not necessarily praise the Irish people outright. Both songs imply that many are unworthy of their ancestry. The latter suggests that many *do* fear to ‘speak of ninety-eight’ and elevates the ‘true man’ above the common ‘coward’. That message, in turn, challenges audiences to surpass their peers, augmenting the reputation of the exemplary nationalist. Protestants were often subject to particular denigration. Nominally, nationalist ideology was non-sectarian (Fenians like Kickham were openly anti-clerical). That position was expressed in song; radical nationalists rarely used hymns. Meanwhile Thomas Davis, a Protestant, encouraged Catholic and Protestant unity in ‘Orange and Green will Carry the Day’:

Landlords fooled us;
 England ruled us,
 Hounding our passions to make us their prey

⁴⁹ *Spirit* (1845), pp. 44-47.

But, in their spite,
The Irish unite,
And Orange and Green will carry the day!⁵⁰

For Davis, religious divisions between ‘Orange’ Protestants and ‘Green’ Catholics were manipulations of landlords and England. Through unity, Ireland could gain independence. While Protestants were welcome in principle, however, they were often the villains of nationalist song. The derogatory depiction of landlords noted by Allingham is one example. Singers also vilified the Orange Order. In ‘Come All You Good Fellows That Want to Get Married’, the narrator blames his wife’s propensity to spend his money on her being ‘an Orangeman’s daughter/and a devil from hell’.⁵¹

In his 1852 article on balladry, Allingham claimed that nationalistic songs were not widely known.⁵² He was unenthusiastic about nationalism, and may have hoped to locate these songs in the past, posing no present danger. While it is true that they formed one part of a wider soundscape that included songs unconcerned with politics, there is substantial evidence contravening Allingham’s claim. The Folklore Commission recorded numerous songs originating with Moore or the *Nation* which entered into oral traditions, evidenced by witnesses who recited them from memory.⁵³ New songs also used nationalist examples such as ‘Memory of the Dead’ as airs, indicating that they were familiar to audiences.⁵⁴ Indeed, the *Nation* composed songs with a deliberate view to their dissemination, using the format and performance style (e.g. memorable, communally rendered refrains) of ‘street ballads’ and ‘old bardic

⁵⁰ Davis, *Essays*, pp. 192-193.

⁵¹ IFC 287:292.

⁵² Allingham, ‘Irish’, p. 367.

⁵³ IFC 329:425-428, 445-448; IFC 296:495-497.

⁵⁴ *Nation*, 19th Sept. 1857; IFC 1442:116; IFC 2217:213; *Irish Freedom*, Sept. 1912.

songs of the country’, making them accessible to ballad singers.⁵⁵ The songs were also printed on ballad sheets, through which some of those interviewed by the Folklore Commission encountered them.⁵⁶ *The Spirit of the Nation* published songs for pianoforte, meaning that they could be played in bourgeois drawing rooms (a fact Charles Gavan Duffy noted with pride), at concerts, in music halls, and in schools and pubs.⁵⁷ Songs such as ‘A Nation Once Again’ increasingly featured at school concerts, with piano accompaniment.⁵⁸ In Joyce’s depiction of a Dublin pub – the Ormond Bar – in *Ulysses*, Simon Dedalus sings a nationalist song accompanied by piano.⁵⁹ Nationalist songbooks, including Young Ireland and Fenian songs, were also advertised in *McGlennon’s Star Song Book*.⁶⁰ Because of their narrow octave range, the songs were easier to sing and play and could be performed on older, shorter pianos, maximising their potential market.⁶¹ They almost exclusively used the English language. As Duffy put it, this ensured that they were not ‘locked from the mass of readers’ as they would have been ‘in the Irish language’.⁶² The format of nationalist songs maximised their potential audience.

Songwriters set their songs to existing airs to increase their appeal to audiences. Airs provided familiar tunes through which to learn new songs, or an implied ideology through which to interpret them. T. D. Sullivan’s ‘God Save Ireland’ was set to the American marching tune ‘Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching’, a decision

⁵⁵ C. G. Duffy, *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland* (Delmar, 1973), p. 18.

⁵⁶ IFC 329:425-428.

⁵⁷ NLI, Rosamund Jacob Diaries (henceforth RJD), 8th Apr. 1912, MS 32,582/20; University College Dublin Archives (henceforth UCDA), ‘Diary’, 21st Mar. 1903, Terence MacSwiney Biographies (henceforth TMB), P48c/99/51; Duffy, *Young*, p. 502.

⁵⁸ *Freeman’s*, 6th Jan. 1870; *Nation*, 19th Aug. 1865; *Anglo-Celt*, 20th Jan. 1906.

⁵⁹ J. Joyce, *Ulysses* (London, 2011), p. 338.

⁶⁰ *McGlennon’s Star Songbook* (Jan. 1897).

⁶¹ *Spirit* (1845), pp. 272-273.

⁶² Duffy, *Ballad*, p. 18.

that Sullivan stated he made 'with full view to getting it into immediate use'.⁶³ The 'Shan Van Vocht', which originated before the 1798 rebellion, is another revealing example. Older versions begin 'The French are on the sea/says the Shan Van Vocht', referring to the anticipated French intervention in an Irish rebellion.⁶⁴ Fenians, instead, placed those expectations in their Irish-American colleagues. An 1868 version read:

There are ships upon the sea,
Says the Shan Van Vocht,
There are good ships on the sea,
Says the Shan Van Vocht,
Oh they're sailing o'er the sea,
From a land where all are free,
With a freight that's dear to me,
Says the Shan Van Vocht.⁶⁵

The 'land where all are free' referred to America, and the Fenians thus adapted an old song for a contemporary context, bringing with it the original's empowering revolutionary connotations. The simple structure and memorable refrain meant that the 'Shan Van Vocht' was easily adapted. Appropriated versions included those romanticising Irish landscape, celebrating a landlord's death, praising Home Rule, threatening unionists, and bemoaning poor coach services in Limerick.⁶⁶ Nationalists also appropriated their opponents' songs. 'Rule Britannia' provided the tune for 'Irish Are No Longer Slaves'.⁶⁷ 'Orange and Green Will Carry the Day' used the air of a unionist song, 'The Protestant Boys'.⁶⁸ Thus, nationalists asserted symbolic power over

⁶³ T. D. Sullivan, *Recollections of Troubled Times in Irish Politics* (Dublin, 1905), p. 178.

⁶⁴ *Irish Minstrelsy* (London, 1887); Zimmermann, *Songs*, p. 133.

⁶⁵ *The Exile of Erin Song Book* (Glasgow, 1868), pp. 49-50.

⁶⁶ *Exile*, p. 18; *Freeman's*, 30th Nov. 1903; *Kildare Observer*, 19th Dec. 1885; IFC 1902:21; Duffy, *Young*, p. 233.

⁶⁷ *Stephen's Fenian Songster* (New York, 1866), p. 55.

⁶⁸ Davis, *Essays*, p. 192; *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs* (Belfast, 1907), p. 92.

Britain by claiming autonomy over their cultural symbols, and undermined the case for unionism by preaching nationalism to the tune of Irish division.

While there is clearly no precise formula for success, it may be suggested that notoriety or contemporaneity enhanced a song's popularity. The press made little mention of 'Memory of the Dead' immediately after its publication in April 1843.⁶⁹ The *Nation's* readership may already have been familiar with the song, but it was Charles Gavan Duffy's arrest for sedition that propelled it to a nationalist anthem. At his trial, 'Memory of the Dead' was offered as an example of the *Nation's* sedition, giving the song unprecedented exposure and cementing its popularity.⁷⁰ Indeed, when it was performed two years later for a 'fashionable audience' in Dublin, the *Nation* remarked 'how far the tide of opinion has arisen since '43, when its audience lay in the court of the Queen's Bench'.⁷¹ 'God Save Ireland' benefited from its context. The title quoted the widely reported last words of one of the Manchester Martyrs before his execution, and the lyrics celebrated their defiance:⁷²

High upon the gallows tree,
Swung the noble hearted three
By the vengeful tyrant stricken in their bloom;
But they met him face to face,
With the courage of their race,
And they went with souls undaunted to their doom

"God Save Ireland", said the heroes,
"God Save Ireland", said they all,
"Whether on the scaffold high,
Or on the battle-field we die,
Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall?"⁷³

⁶⁹ *Nation*, 1st Apr. 1843.

⁷⁰ *Nation*, 11th Nov. 1843.

⁷¹ *Nation*, 18th Oct. 1845.

⁷² *Freeman's*, 4th Nov. 1867; *Examiner*, 6th Nov. 1867; *Nation*, 9th Nov. 1867; *Connaught Telegraph* (henceforth *Telegraph*), 27th Nov. 1867.

⁷³ *Nation*, 7th Dec. 1867.

Sullivan's was the third song of this title published.⁷⁴ His lyrics, too, were inspired by, if not plagiarised from, M. J. Barry's 'The Place Where Men Should Die', both demonstrating the 'elaborate Victorian rhetoric' of noble masculine sacrifice that characterised nationalist expression.⁷⁵ Sullivan's version, however, benefited from its use of an existing air and from its publication the day before the martyrs' funeral, when interest was at its height.⁷⁶

As 'God Save Ireland' suggests, Fenians used music extensively. However, sources on music's impact on active Fenians are not as abundant as those on the revolutionary generation of 1916-21. In his memoir, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa cited Thomas Davis as an influence.⁷⁷ John O'Leary wrote that his 'conversion' to nationalism was a direct result of reading the songs of Davis, and suggested that the music of Young Ireland had taught Irishmen 'not only not to fear to speak of the men of '98, but to think and feel that the right thing to do was to imitate them'.⁷⁸ John Devoy, similarly, wrote that the songs from his youth were 'full of fighting spirit' and 'as patriotic as those of Young Ireland'.⁷⁹ He also believed that the people were 'reading the literature of the Young Irelanders' and 'becoming ripe for the Fenian recruiting agent'.⁸⁰ In Mark Ryan's idyllic portrait of his childhood, he described pipe and fiddle music as integral to the 'old customs that survived the famine' that were 'still in vogue'.⁸¹ It would be simplistic to

⁷⁴ *Nation*, 30th Nov. 1867; *Telegraph*, 4th Dec. 1867.

⁷⁵ 'But whether on the scaffold high/Or in the battle's van/The fittest place where man can die/Is where he dies for man', *Spirit* (1845), pp. 223-224; Foster, *Vivid*, p. 109; A. Fletcher, 'Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of Victorian Manliness', *History*, 99 (334) (2014), pp. 40-72.

⁷⁶ *Nation*, 7th Dec. 1867.

⁷⁷ Rossa, *Years*, p. 21.

⁷⁸ O'Leary, *Recollections I*, pp. 2-3; J. O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism Vol II* (Shannon, 1969), p. 227.

⁷⁹ Devoy, *Recollections*, pp. 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 20.

⁸¹ Ryan, *Fenian*, pp. 10-11.

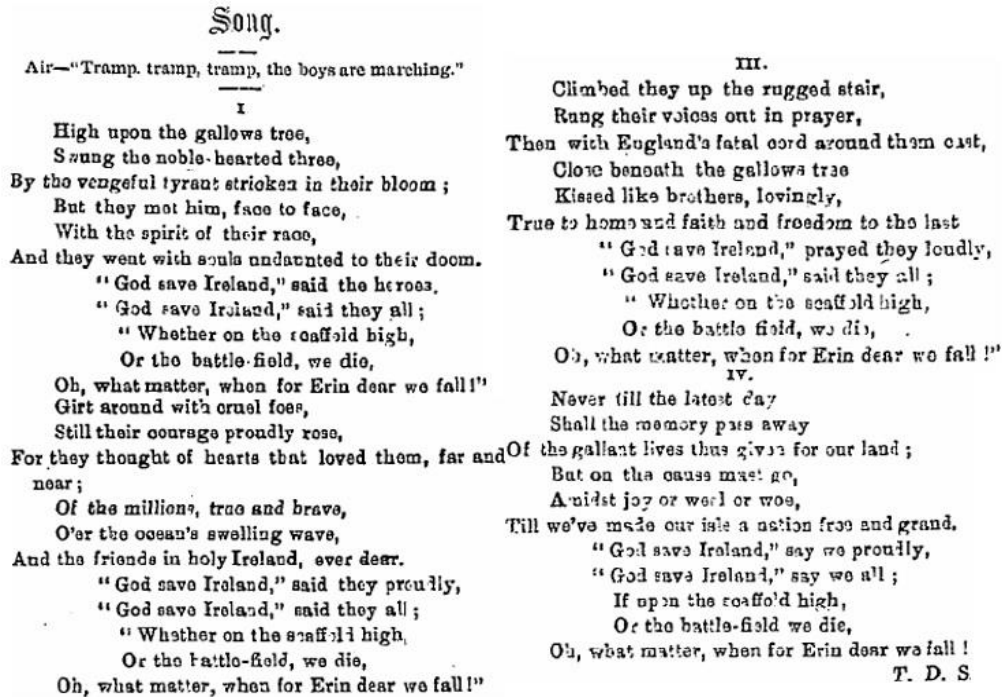


Figure 1 – 'God Save Ireland', *Nation*, 7th Dec. 1867,

say music made these men into nationalists. Nevertheless, their memoirs demonstrate that music formed part of the prism through which Fenians viewed their ideological development; that it may have served as an early means through which they engaged with nationalist ideas, and that they believed it could encourage others into the movement.

That Fenian propaganda actively employed music is without doubt. Deliberately mimicking the *Nation*, their newspapers, the *Irish People* and *Flag of Ireland*, published songs expressing defiance ('we are not yet a conquered race') and attacking the 'terror' of British rule.⁸² For imprisoned nationalists, music rendered incarceration more tolerable. O'Donovan Rossa, Devoy, and Michael Davitt all described writing or singing songs while imprisoned as a distraction and pastime.⁸³ When the government

⁸² *Flag of Ireland* (henceforth *Flag*), 5th Sept. 1868; O'Leary, *Recollections I*, p. 257.

⁸³ Rossa, *Years*, pp. 82-92; Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 193; M. Davitt, *Leaves from a Prison Diary* (London, 1885), pp. 112, 121.

released Charles Kickham and other prisoners in 1868, crowds celebrating in Dublin sang ‘Rory of the Hill’ and ‘God Save Ireland’.⁸⁴ As these communal performances suggest, music was socially valuable. IRB members participated in band-led public marches and excursions, in spite of any tension between those performances and their supposed secrecy.⁸⁵ They also used concerts of romanticised nationalist music to fundraise, particularly in America. In New York in July 1864, the Fenian Brotherhood held a concert for this purpose, concluding with ‘Memory of the Dead’.⁸⁶ Public musical performances also asserted the movement’s strength and commemorated its actions. In 1861, at the funeral of 1848 rebel Terence MacManus, Fenians were among the principal organisers as bands marched ahead of the hearse, mimicking a State or military funeral.⁸⁷ Fife and drum bands, like those in the British army, conveyed the image of a legitimate national funeral. At annual demonstrations commemorating the Manchester Martyrs, nationalist songs and fife and drum bands abounded. In 1879, an estimated 2,000 attended as bands played ‘Wearing of the Green’ and ‘God Save Ireland’ in Dublin, while the following year a brass band played ‘God Save Ireland’ during a procession through Ballyshannon.⁸⁸

Such displays were undoubtedly provocative. One correspondent to the *Cork Examiner* in December 1867 complained that the ‘music’ at ‘Fenian processions’ provoked ‘animosity between her majesty’s subjects’, referring to the wording of the Party

⁸⁴ *Flag*, 13th Mar. 1868.

⁸⁵ Comerford, ‘Patriotism’, p. 244.

⁸⁶ National Archives of Ireland (henceforth NAI), ‘Concert and Ball of the Fenian Brotherhood at Platt’s Music Hall’, Fenian Briefs Carton 6.

⁸⁷ *Examiner*, 4th Nov. 1861; Ryan, *Fenian*, p. 25; M. Ramon, ‘National Brotherhoods and National Leagues: The IRB and its Constitutional Rivals During the 1860s’ in F. McGarry and J. McConnel (eds.), *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Ireland* (Dublin, 2009), pp. 25-30; G. Moran, ‘The National Brotherhood of St. Patrick in Britain in the 1860s’, *Irish Studies Review* 7 (3) (1999), p. 331.

⁸⁸ *Freeman’s*, 25th Nov. 1879; *Nation*, 4th Dec. 1880.

Processions Act (1850).⁸⁹ The Act was designed to prevent sectarian parades from inciting violence.⁹⁰ It made provision to arrest 'persons playing music or singing songs which may be calculated or intended to provoke animosity between different classes of her majesty's subjects'.⁹¹ It was targeted more often at Orangemen (see Chapter Six) and was repealed in 1872. The government instead policed parades using common law. However, even when police targeted nationalists, Dublin Castle (the seat of British government in Ireland) did not prosecute unless those parading either used or threatened violence. Thus, they pursued convictions where singing marchers carried swords in Cork in 1892, where they threw stones at opponents and police in Tipperary in 1903, or when they threatened individuals in attempts to force them to surrender property in land disputes in Galway in 1905.⁹² Where groups only sang or played instruments, the Castle took no action.⁹³ When police, failing to understand the distinction, requested prosecutions for what they described as 'intimidatory whistling', one adviser lost patience:

I have many times pointed out that in order to justify the treatment of any meeting as an unlawful assembly, the police should be in such a position that, if impleaded in court, they could prove by legal evidence that it was an unlawful assembly, that is, an assembly convened to afford an unlawful object, or a lawful object by unlawful means, or was attended by such circumstances of terror and alarm that men of reasonable sense and courage would be put in fear by it.⁹⁴

Music alone was thus insufficient for conviction without conditions of terror. Such nuances had little impact on nationalist responses. That these policies could be

⁸⁹ *Examiner*, 12th Dec. 1867.

⁹⁰ Comerford, *Fenians*, p. 20.

⁹¹ *Freeman's*, 9th Mar. 1861.

⁹² Colonial Office Papers (Henceforth CO) 904/30/103; CO 904/31/35, 42, 44 & 55; CO 904/32/42.

⁹³ CO 904/30/7, 12, 21 & 32; CO 904/31/28, 41, 71, 73 & 98; CO 904/32/38.

⁹⁴ CO 904/33/4.

construed as oppressive is unsurprising. When the Fenian land activist Michael Davitt speculated on the nature of a reverse political paradigm in which Ireland would rule England he wrote:

The singing of “Rule Britannia” or “Britons never shall be slaves” would cause the instant dismissal of any English subordinate official of the Castle who should thus manifest his disloyalty to Irish rule (Such songs would be considered treasonable, and a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary would be only doing his duty to “London Castle” by arresting any person whom he should hear “whistling” such tunes with the intent of intimidating her majesty’s English subjects).⁹⁵

Davitt’s comments, and his allusion to the Party Processions Act, demonstrate that as far as nationalists were concerned, Britain was suppressing political music.

In other instances, music provided supporting evidence for convictions that were not themselves linked to music. In October 1865, a group of men in Limerick were tried for being Fenians; that they were heard singing 'Rising of the Moon' was one piece of evidence used in their prosecution.⁹⁶ Similarly, in 1910, Sam Sillestone was convicted of assault. During his trial, prosecutors suggested that he had provoked his victim, evidently a unionist, by singing 'God Save Ireland'.⁹⁷ After the events of 1867, police seemingly targeted convictions on the basis of songs more directly, but only to a limited extent. In January 1868, Jeremiah Cronin was imprisoned after performing a ballad about the Manchester Martyrs that police described as 'calculated to provoke a breach of the peace'.⁹⁸ His conviction focussed on his having a five hundred strong crowd attending his performance who followed him around Dublin. At his trial, the judge

⁹⁵ Davitt, *Leaves*, p. 299.

⁹⁶ *Nation*, 28th Oct. 1865; *Examiner*, 26th Oct. 1865.

⁹⁷ *Freeman's*, 9th Dec. 1910.

⁹⁸ NAI, Fenian R Series, R572.

concluded that his conduct 'might have provoked a riot'. Insofar as seditious content was at fault, it was the song's ability to incite a 'brawl' within the audience that concerned the judge. 'One person might be satisfied that the executions should take place,' he stated, 'while others might dissent from that opinion'.⁹⁹ The police response to John Carrey, the informer who alerted them to Cronin, indicates that they did not consider seditious singing a serious threat. Despite his repeated requests, Carrey remained unpaid. He was, police said, of 'weak mind' and further work from him would not be worth the investment.¹⁰⁰ In February 1868, Constable Thomas Stewart reported seeing a copy of 'God Save Ireland' in a shop window. Stewart immediately purchased a copy and showed his commander. The latter then wrote to his superiors expressing the belief that the owner, Mr. McDonnell, was 'an active Fenian agent' and asked whether proceedings would be taken against him.¹⁰¹ No action against McDonnell was taken. In any case, it seems unlikely, if there was a policy of general suppression against seditious songs, that he would have displayed the ballad in his window and then sold a copy to an enquiring policeman.¹⁰² Therefore, the available evidence suggests that the authorities rarely saw Fenian songs as substantially subversive.

Nationalist music and Fenianism became synonymous, illustrated in the regularity with which reporters used the term 'Fenian songs' when describing nationalist demonstrations.¹⁰³ This was not, as Zimmermann implies, inevitable. Rather, it was the result of musical cultures that adapted to existing soundscapes. Moreover, the themes of nationalist musical culture established during this period endured. Through notoriety,

⁹⁹ NAI R572.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ NAI, Fenian R Series, 3083R.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ *Leinster Express* (henceforth *Leinster*), 20th June, 1866.

contemporaneity, and widespread publicity via the press, songs became political anthems. Public performance was socially valuable, assertive, and potentially confrontational. Music was key to the process by which radical nationalist ideologies became politically appealing.

II

Appropriating Radicalism: Nationalist Music and Home Rule

After 1867, radical and constitutional nationalists cooperated more closely. The barrister Isaac Butt provided many Fenians with legal representation, and headed the Amnesty Association calling for their release from 1869. In 1870, he founded the Irish Home Government Association, which became the Home Rule League in 1873. They campaigned not for an independent republic, but devolved government within the UK. When the more radical Charles Stewart Parnell became leader of the organisation, he forged a more formal alliance with Fenians. The latter provided Parnell with support and funding. In exchange, Parnell pursued more aggressive, obstructionist tactics in Parliament and supported agrarian agitation for land reform. The Land War (1879-1882), organised by radicals in the Land League and National Land League in collaboration with the Parliamentary Party, resulted in the arrest of Parnell and other senior leaders. Parnell was released when he agreed to end the campaign and support Prime Minister William Gladstone's Liberals in Parliament. In return, Gladstone supported land reform and a 'Home Rule' bill on devolution. Almost immediately, a Fenian splinter (the 'Invincibles') murdered two British officials in Dublin's Phoenix Park. Nonetheless, Parnell's alliance with the Liberals delivered a Home Rule Bill in 1886, although it was rejected by the Commons. The following year, *The Times* accused Parnell of having prior knowledge of the Phoenix Park murders. An inquiry in 1889 cleared him, but the following year he was implicated in the divorce of William and Katharine O'Shea, with whom he had a long-term affair. The Catholic Church and the Liberals withdrew their support, and the party split, with Parnell's supporters in the minority.

Parnell died in 1891, but the splits survived. Home Rule MPs Justin McCarthy, Tim Healy and William O'Brien were among the principal 'anti-Parnellites'. The 'Parnellites', now led by MP John Redmond, remained a minority. The House of Lords, meanwhile, rejected a second Home Rule Bill in 1892. Eventually, and partly in response to the formation of William O'Brien's United Irish League, the rest of the constitutional nationalist movement reunited under Redmond. To this was added the support of two friendly societies: The Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish National Foresters. Both grew rapidly after they began providing members with insurance. The Hibernians, headed by nationalist MP Joseph Devlin, were committed to nationalism and Catholicism (Protestants could not join).¹⁰⁴ The Foresters broke away from the British Ancient Order of Foresters in order to pursue nationalist politics.¹⁰⁵ The reunified Parliamentary Party succeeded in having a Home Rule Bill passed in 1912, but the outbreak of war delayed its implementation. Although these movements were constitutional and moderate in approach, nationalist rhetoric was vital to their politics.¹⁰⁶ This served their electoral purposes, but also legitimised radical ideals. Those ideals were indulged in the centenary celebrations of the 1798 rebellion, and in criticisms of British rule in South Africa during the Boer War (1899-1902). Music facilitated the expression, performance, and popularisation of these ideals to a mass audience.

Fenian associations did not preclude nationalist music garnering patronage from less radical audiences. As stated, setting songs for piano made them accessible to

¹⁰⁴ Cork City and County Archives (henceforth CCCA), Tivy Papers, U116/C/3/2.

¹⁰⁵ *Irish National Foresters Benefit Society* (Dublin, 1912).

¹⁰⁶ M. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 97-98.

professional musicians. Thus, nationalist music became a staple of respectable venues and events. Unsurprisingly given his reputation, Moore's *Melodies* were among the first that they adopted. The New Music Hall in Dublin broadly featured art music and often ended concerts with 'God Save the Queen', but by 1842 also included songs by Moore such as 'The Last Rose of Summer'.¹⁰⁷ By 1868, the tastes of these venues developed such that the orchestra of 'a grand soiree and ball' hosted at the 'Great Hall of the Athenaeum' in Waterford repeated 'God Save Ireland' multiple times.¹⁰⁸ These less politically charged performance spaces did not render 'God Save Ireland' less nationalistic, but rather made nationalism accessible to a wider audience. St Patrick's Day performances were a ready environment for radical music. Whereas 'God Save the Queen' concluded celebrations in Dublin in 1858 outside the home of the Lord Lieutenant (the government's representative in Ireland), in 1869 crowds shouted down 'God Save the Queen' and sang the nationalistic 'Garryowen' instead.¹⁰⁹ These concerts brought a radical rhetoric into respectable environments, enhancing its legitimacy. Nationalist songs were, therefore, also accessible for constitutional nationalists.

There were few songs written specifically about parliamentary nationalists. Examples praising candidates appeared prior to elections, but candidates likely commissioned these songs themselves. There is no evidence that they resonated with audiences.¹¹⁰ 'Home Rule for Ireland' praises Isaac Butt as 'our noble chief', but is an isolated example.¹¹¹ Even songs on Parnell were relatively rare. Short bursts of Parnell ballads

¹⁰⁷ *Freeman's*, 23rd Oct. 1844; *Freeman's*, 23rd Feb. 1842.

¹⁰⁸ *Nation*, 20th Mar. 1868.

¹⁰⁹ *Examiner*, 22nd Mar. 1861; *Exile*, p. 124.

¹¹⁰ 'A New and Admired Song in Praise of Mr Smith Barry at the Coming Election', Bodleian Ballads (henceforth BB), 2806.C.8(67).

¹¹¹ 'Home Rule for Ireland', BB, Harding B13(340).

appeared at flashpoints during his career in which he was more easily cast as the hero or martyr, as when he was arrested or during the Phoenix Park inquiry.¹¹² ‘The Blackbird of Avondale’, written in 1881, laments Parnell’s arrest and calls for his release through nationalistic language (he ‘fought hard for freedom’).¹¹³ His death also inspired songs, typically laments. ‘The Grave of Parnell’, for example, declares ‘Erin is weeping to-day’.¹¹⁴ For James Joyce in his short story, ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’, praising Parnell unequivocally only after his death was a futile exercise. Joyce’s characters, after a discussion that exposes nationalists’ divisions, commemorate the anniversary of Parnell’s death with a recital in verse – ‘The Death of Parnell’ – that refers repeatedly, hopelessly, and unsubtly to his death (‘He is dead. Our uncrowned King is dead’).¹¹⁵

Instead, the uses of music by constitutionalists reinforces Matthew Kelly’s argument that parliamentarians engaged in the ‘dogged pursuit of the rhetoric of independence’ in order to achieve an ‘alignment with the heroes of the separatist pantheon’.¹¹⁶ Thus, in place of a widespread tradition praising parliamentarians, constitutionalists adopted radical songs. Crowds sang ‘Wearing of the Green’ to welcome Parnell to a Liverpool rally in 1879, and ‘God Save Ireland’ to celebrate an election victory in Ballyconnell in 1885.¹¹⁷ By appropriating revolutionary music, constitutionalists presented politics as rebellion by other means. Land League campaigners similarly appropriated nationalist songs, conflating land reform and nationalism to the benefit of both. Police reported incidents in which tenants used music to intimidate landlords, while the Phoenix Park

¹¹² NLI, ‘Parnell’s Victory over the “Times”’, *Broadside Ballads* – Vol. 12 – P, 12B 782.

¹¹³ Zimmermann, *Songs*, p. 277.

¹¹⁴ NLI, ‘Lines on the Death of C. S. Parnell’, *Broadside Ballads* – Vol. 12 – P, 12B 782; NLI, ‘The Grave of Parnell’, *Broadside Ballads* – Vol. 12 – P, 12B 782.

¹¹⁵ J. Joyce, ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’ in J. Joyce, *Dubliners* (London, 2000), p. 131.

¹¹⁶ Kelly, *Fenian*, pp. 97-98.

¹¹⁷ *Freeman’s*, 1st Dec. 1879; *Anglo-Celt*, 19th Dec. 1885.

inquiry noted that in May 1881 locals in Galway sang a ballad celebrating the murder of a man who took over the land of an evicted tenant.¹¹⁸ The nature of musical performances energised supporters. Bands often played at National League meetings, creating a spectacle. For example, newspapers reported that a Temperance Band ‘enlivened proceedings’ when they played at a National Land League meeting Tralee in February 1885, including a rendition of ‘God Save Ireland’.¹¹⁹ Song content reflected the strength of the relationship between land reform and national liberation. Folklore collectors in Donegal recorded a song commemorating a clergyman who was evicted after standing up for a land activist. The final stanza explicitly links his cause with nationalism:

But thank God the time is approaching when base oppressors all,
Will cease to persecute the poor from Cork to Donegal
When people's rights will crush out might and freedom soon will come,
Where floats old Erin's emerald flag and heaven's brightest sun.¹²⁰

In rendering nationalism relevant to rural experiences, nationalists could capitalise on this association between land reform and national liberation and mobilise support among rural communities. The songs included in *The Land League Song Book*, published in 1881, suggest that nationalist songs ('Memory of the Dead', 'God Save Ireland') attracted paying audiences to the book and to the land movement.¹²¹ These songs were primarily nationalist, meaning that audiences unaffected by land disputes could still buy into the cause through its association with wider ideals. The musical amalgamation of the two causes broadened their appeal. These musical cultures blurred

¹¹⁸ CO 904/31/41; M. Mulholland, ‘Land War Homicides’ in S. Pašeta (ed.), *Uncertain Futures: Essays about the Irish Past for Roy Foster* (Oxford, 2016), p. 91.

¹¹⁹ *Examiner*, 17th Feb. 1885; *Kerry Sentinel* (henceforth *Sentinel*), 17th Feb. 1885.

¹²⁰ IFC 1854:149-150.

¹²¹ *Nation*, 11th Jun. 1881.

the boundaries between violent and constitutional traditions, providing the appearance of common ground.

After the Parnell split, each of the emergent factions aligned themselves with nationalist musical traditions. Tim Healy, anti-Parnellite, led a procession in Dundalk in 1892 alongside the ‘Emmet Band’, named for Robert Emmet.¹²² T. D. Sullivan, another anti-Parnellite, sang his own song, ‘God Save Ireland’, at meetings.¹²³ In both examples, the anti-Parnellites implied that they were the legitimate representatives of nationalist music’s political heritage. Parnellites did so more extensively. In December 1890, after Parnell addressed a meeting in Ballina, his supporters sang ‘God Save Ireland’. The *Western People*, reporting on the rally, also printed a song by an Irish emigrant in Philadelphia, ‘Ireland’s Answer’:

The die is cast, the crisis grave
Confronts us face to face,
And clear across the English wave
Speaks out the Irish race
“Give up your chief”, the challenge proud
Comes from an ancient foe,
But back in tones of thunder loud,
Rings Ireland’s answer “No”.¹²⁴

The author’s emigrant perspective was perhaps simplistic, but the song reveals something of the Parnellite position that allowed them to more comfortably appropriate nationalist music. Whereas anti-Parnellites supported the Liberal alliance, Parnellites insisted upon independence from the English party. Hence, they rejected the calls of their ‘ancient foe’ to ‘give up’ their ‘chief’. Parnellites rarely sang these songs. Rather,

¹²² *Evening Herald* (henceforth *Evening*), 4th Jul. 1892.

¹²³ *Evening*, 28th Jan. 1892.

¹²⁴ *Western People* (henceforth *Western*), 27th Dec. 1890.

like their opponents, they employed existing songs. Parnellite Charles Tanner urged his opponents to reconsider their position in a speech in November 1894 in which he also quoted ‘God Save Ireland’.¹²⁵ ‘The Boys of Wexford’ (by Robert Dwyer Joyce, commemorating 1798) was a staple, referencing the Wexford origins of John Redmond and his brother, William.¹²⁶ A band played ‘The Boys of Wexford’ to mark William Redmond’s victory in Clare in 1892.¹²⁷ They also sought to externalise the anti-Parnellites from nationalist music. In June 1892, the Parnellite *Evening Herald* claimed that many bands refused to play Healy’s rallies, implying that the practitioners of nationalist music rejected him.¹²⁸ In some instances, competition over musical culture became confrontation. In Kerry in March 1893, the Boherbee fife and drum band (Parnellite) wrecked the premises of the anti-Parnellite Strand fife and drum band.¹²⁹ The incident illustrates the value that rival factions placed on monopolising legitimate use of nationalist music.

Although nationalists used radical music to reinforce divisions, they also employed it in their attempts to reunite. John Redmond’s enthusiasm for nationalist music gave additional impetus to these tactics. Early in his political career, he wrote his own nationalist ballads. For example, ‘Famine and Freedom’ in 1880:

No! By the memory of the dead
The martyr’d dead who fell for Erin’s cause
By every drop of blood they shed
We swear to battle against British laws!

¹²⁵ *Examiner*, 26th Nov. 1894.

¹²⁶ D. Meleady, *Redmond: The Parnellite* (Cork, 2008), p. 99.

¹²⁷ *Sentinel*, 17th Dec. 1892.

¹²⁸ *Evening*, 16th Jun. 1892.

¹²⁹ *Kerry Evening Post* (henceforth *Kerry*), 8th Mar. 1893.

Redmond demonstrates his familiarity with nationalist balladry by deploying common tropes of the tradition ('martyr'd dead', 'British laws'), and directly referencing 'Memory of the Dead'.¹³⁰ He also quoted 'Memory of the Dead' to conclude a lecture marking the 1798 centenary.¹³¹ Separately, he lectured on 'The Ballad Poetry of Ireland'.¹³² The 1798 centenary was an opportunity for nationalists to call for unity. At one celebration, after crowds sang 'Memory of the Dead', Joseph Devlin said that they, clearly, did not fear to speak of ninety-eight. He then encouraged the crowd to unite so that their 'fight in the British Parliament would be successful'.¹³³

While nationalist musical cultures were useful for Redmond, they also encouraged those of a more radical viewpoint. The Young Ireland Society (a nationalist literary society eventually controlled almost entirely by Fenians), contributed significantly to the centenary. At one of their events in Kerry in January 1898, the chair gave an address about 'ballad poetry written on the '98 movement'. Nationalists, he said, 'treasured the sentiments of their ballad poetry' and were 'yearning to translate those sentiments into action'. By singing such songs, he continued, they would 'keep alive and glowing that spirit of hate and vengeance which every good Irishman should nurse in his breast against their inveterate and relentless oppressor'.¹³⁴ Similarly, some parliamentarians used music during the Boer War to criticise the government; William Redmond lamented that children were 'taught to sing "God Save the Queen"' while Britain fought

¹³⁰ Meleady, *Redmond*, p. 34.

¹³¹ J. Redmond, *Historical and Political Addresses* (Dublin, 1898), p. 178.

¹³² NLI, John Redmond Papers (henceforth JRP), MS 15,274.

¹³³ *Anglo-Celt*, 23rd Apr. 1898.

¹³⁴ *Sentinel*, 12th Jan. 1898; R. F. Foster, 'Remembering 1798' in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 67-94.

a 'hideous war' that achieved 'no great victories'.¹³⁵ Others supported the Boers and the Irishmen who fought with them more explicitly. 'A Song for the Boers' (1902) read:

God save all who strive for freedom,
 God save the valiant Irish band,
 Who fought on the Transvaal shore,
 May they live to strike once more,
 The oppressors in our own down-trodden land.¹³⁶

The song used the tune of 'God Save Ireland', aligning nationalism with anti-imperialism through the parallel deployment of the two movements in song. Nationalist songs had previously called for assistance from France or Irish emigrants, but a united, anti-imperialist front with resistance groups in British colonies was relatively new. Thus, nationalist music demonstrates that the causes appropriated by the reunited constitutionalists also presented opportunities, albeit limited at this stage, to proponents of more radical new ideas.

Alongside its rhetorical importance, the sociability, spectacle, and communal performance rituals of nationalist music created a sense of occasion and legitimacy, attracting crowds and press attention to the advantage of attending politicians. Nationalist bands performed in a manner similar to British army equivalents. At Parnell's funeral in 1891, several bands gave the spectacle the appearance of a State funeral and positioned Parnell in the same tradition as Fenian heroes like Terence MacManus.¹³⁷ Parliamentary politicians also appeared regularly at concerts. In 1907, Joseph Devlin wrote to John Redmond and commented that he was being inundated

¹³⁵ *Sentinel*, 25th Apr. 1900.

¹³⁶ *Nenagh News*, 8th Feb. 1902.

¹³⁷ *Leinster*, 17th Oct. 1891.

with 'invitations from our Irish societies to speak at their annual concerts'.¹³⁸ Communal singing asserted shared ideologies. A song taken up spontaneously by crowds like those in Liverpool that sang 'Wearing of the Green' in 1879, necessarily one with which all present were comfortable engaging and to which all knew the lyrics, represents the implicit negotiation and construction of a consensual ideal. If large numbers of those present objected to the nationalism of 'Wearing of the Green', it seems unlikely that it would have continued. Communal performance also gave the impression of empowerment. Advertisements for a Home Rule rally in 1912 used the slogan '250,000 voices will chorus Davis's immortal song' ('A Nation Once Again'), implying that the numbers expressing their shared ideology increased its potential to manifest.¹³⁹ 'A Nation Once Again' was particularly popular (as was 'God Save Ireland'), reflected in an exasperated report on a 1912 Home Rule demonstration in *The Times*:

About one hundred and fifty bands kept a persistent music during the afternoon. Nearly all confined themselves to the tune of "A Nation Once Again" which, after a while, even the patriots must have found monotonous. It was intended, perhaps, to represent a sort of shouting round the walls of Jericho, for it was played at least 2000 times in the course of the day.¹⁴⁰

More directly, the sound generated by these performances filled and established a perceived autonomy over political spaces.¹⁴¹ Songs conveyed ideology, and the loudest ideology controlled the immediate space. In Derry in April 1885 opposing factions of the audience at the Royal Opera House sang 'God Save the Queen' and 'God Save Ireland' after a tableau portraying the Prince of Wales. The latter, reported the

¹³⁸ NLI, JRP, MS 15,180/3.

¹³⁹ *Irish Independent* (henceforth *Independent*), 27th Mar. 1912.

¹⁴⁰ *The Times*, 1st Apr. 1912.

¹⁴¹ Lefebvre, *Production*, pp. 26, 85.

Freeman's Journal, won out, disrupting a British space with a monarchist soundscape and temporarily creating a nationalist space.¹⁴² Such performances also intimidated and antagonised opponents. In 1902, crowds at a Cork concert hall unhappy with 'jingo songs' sang 'God Save Ireland', forcing performers from the stage and inciting a brawl with 'jingo elements' of the audience.¹⁴³

The constitutional movement's increasingly close relationship with the Ancient Order of Hibernians and Irish National Foresters encouraged more pronounced musical performances. The former was particularly active in Ulster, although it also had a strong presence in Cork.¹⁴⁴ Both groups had vibrant musical cultures, including bands; the *Hibernian Journal*, the Hibernian newspaper, advertised band instruments in every issue.¹⁴⁵ The Hibernians' largest demonstrations each year were St Patrick's Day and Lady Day on 15 August, marking the Virgin Mary's ascension to Heaven. Hibernian concerts and parades raised funds, provided social activities, and gave branches easy publicity.¹⁴⁶ The musical choices of both organisations were unashamedly nationalistic. A Foresters concert in Castleblayney in 1905 included 'O'Donnell Abu', while its annual conventions and those of its women's branches concluded with 'God Save Ireland'.¹⁴⁷ A Hibernian concert commemorating the Manchester Martyrs in Keady concluded with the same song. These concerts were ideal opportunities to call for nationalist unity. In Keady, the chair James Duffin quoted 'Memory of the Dead' in a

¹⁴² *Freeman's*, 28th Apr. 1885.

¹⁴³ *Freeman's*, 8th Apr. 1902.

¹⁴⁴ CCCA, AOH Crosshaven Minutes, SM52.

¹⁴⁵ *Hibernian Journal* (henceforth *Hibernian*), Aug. 1908.

¹⁴⁶ *Hibernian*, Dec. 1907; *Annual Convention of the Irish National Foresters* (Waterford, 1921); P. Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999), p. 95.

¹⁴⁷ *Anglo-Celt*, 25th Mar. 1905; *Evening*, 5th Dec. 1901; *Independent*, 6th Aug. 1909.

speech, emphasising the line ‘teach us to unite’.¹⁴⁸ J. C. R. Lardner, nationalist MP, was a senior Forester, and regularly appeared at concerts and rallies. In 1903, he and the Foresters marked the centenary of Robert Emmet’s execution with a march to ‘Memory of the Dead’.¹⁴⁹ Unlike the Fenians, Catholicism was central to Hibernian (though not Forester) ideology. Hymns like ‘Faith of our Fathers’ were common.¹⁵⁰ Their own songs also expressed religious themes, including ‘A Rallying Song for the AOH’:

We love you dear old Ireland, because you are our home,
Our God, our priests, our Holy faith, no matter where we roam.¹⁵¹

As well as invigorating performances with high-profile events calling for unity, the Hibernians thus injected an overt Catholicism into nationalist music.

To conclude, constitutionalists normalised the use of nationalist music in Irish politics. By associating Home Rule and land reform with a national mission and historic rebellions, figures like Parnell and Redmond broadened their appeal. Public performances, with bands and communal singing, empowered supporters and created a spectacle. The efforts made, particularly by Parnellites, to claim autonomy over nationalist music after the split, and its use in reunification, illustrate music’s rhetorical value. Home Rulers successfully appropriated musical cultures romanticising methods that they were unwilling to actually employ. In more turbulent circumstances others, already indulging in the musical cultures that constitutionalists encouraged, were less reticent.

¹⁴⁸ *Hibernian*, Jan. 1909.

¹⁴⁹ *Anglo-Celt*, 22nd Aug. 1903.

¹⁵⁰ *Hibernian*, May 1907.

¹⁵¹ *Hibernian*, Aug. 1907.

III

Gaelicising ‘The Seonín Maids of Eirinn’: The Politics of Ireland’s Musical Revivals

Revival was a defining concept of pre-revolutionary Irish culture, with various activists driving initiatives in drama, sport, language, and music. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), founded in 1884, institutionalised and promoted ‘Irish’ sports. In 1893, the Gaelic League was formed by a group of academics and writers, principally Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill of Trinity and University College Dublin (UCD) respectively. The League sought to revive Irish language and culture, and grew rapidly, peaking at 964 branches in 1906.¹⁵² Its rhetoric promoted anti-materialism and, by association, anti-Englishness, stressing Irish culture’s distinctive morality.¹⁵³ It was nominally welcoming to Catholics and Protestants (Hyde was Protestant), but benefitted from a close relationship with Catholic clergymen.¹⁵⁴ Initially only culturally nationalist, by 1915 it had been infiltrated and appropriated by the IRB.¹⁵⁵ Where the League represented the Gaelic revival, the centrepiece of the literary revival was the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, which opened in 1904 at the initiative of poets and playwrights, notably W. B. Yeats. Just as Yeats asserted his Irishness by incorporating folklore into his poetry, the Abbey produced plays on Irish themes, although they used the English language.¹⁵⁶ Music was subject to the forces of revival as much as sport, language and literature. In particular, the Gaelic League used song as a tool for spreading the language, and sought to define and promote Irish forms. Concerts and féiseanna

¹⁵² T. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910* (Syracuse, 2008), p. 87.

¹⁵³ Strachan and Nally, *Advertising*, p. 180.

¹⁵⁴ McMahon, *Grand*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ R. F. Foster, *Paddy & Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London, 1993), p. 227.

(festivals incorporating musical competitions and performances) were a substantial part of its activities, notably the Oireachtas, a national festival in Dublin begun in 1897. The Féis Ceoil, which promoted art music rather than exclusively Irish forms, began the same year. Similar to the Abbey, the Féis Ceoil aspired to provide a more cosmopolitan counterpart to Gaelic League musical cultures. Such has been their appeal that both festivals still operate today.

Irish musical revival was not exceptional. In common with other European revivals, it was at least partially a response to transnational stimuli.¹⁵⁷ A growing interest in eighteenth-century Britain in ‘primitive’ music as something ‘natural’ focused on the Scottish highlands.¹⁵⁸ This developed into a chronological understanding. These ‘savage’ communities were isolated; their cultural characteristics were those of the past and therefore their music contained the origins of modern culture. Scholars looked to modern day ‘savage’ societies, in Scotland and elsewhere (e.g. China). They identified what they believed to be the natural pentatonic scale (consisting of five rather than seven notes) which, they theorised, originated in China.¹⁵⁹ This search for origins gave way to ‘tradition’ and ‘folk’ music. Rather than universal values, peasant musical cultures provided a living bridge with the past in which the ‘defining element of nation’ might be identified.¹⁶⁰ With rural populations declining while urban cultures appeared increasingly cosmopolitan, scholars framed collecting, preserving and defining these ‘dying’ cultures as a salvage operation.¹⁶¹ Collection revealed constant variation and

¹⁵⁷ O. Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (London, 2003).

¹⁵⁸ Gelbart, *Invention*, pp. 11, 40.

¹⁵⁹ Gelbart, *Invention*, pp. 111-115, 122; C. Brăiloiu, *Problems of Ethnomusicology* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 43.

¹⁶⁰ Gelbart, *Invention*, pp. 138-162; Nettl, *Nettl's Elephant*, p. 13.

¹⁶¹ Gelbart, *Invention*, p. 167.

improvisation, which collectors attributed to performers' preference for ornamentation, rather than any limit on the continuity that such cultures provided with the past.

Scholars similarly edited tunes without pentatonic scales to ensure they were presented in their 'purest' form.¹⁶² This occurred across Britain and Europe, with London especially providing a space for cultural exchange between revivals.¹⁶³ Each treated the pentatonic scale as a national trait; as Hungarian ethnomusicologist Constantin Brăiloiu noted in 1924, there was little to separate the definitions offered by the different nations.¹⁶⁴ Enthusiasts also attempted to reinvigorate and institutionalise such music as a living culture. Welsh revivalists established a festival, the Eisteddfod, to promote the Welsh language and 'traditional' Welsh culture.¹⁶⁵ Where folklorists aimed to preserve peasant cultures, meanwhile, composers sought to incorporate traditional culture into their art music to give it a natural or national quality.¹⁶⁶

Irish musicians and scholars borrowed from and adapted developments in folklore liberally. After the Belfast Harpers Festival, Edward Bunting published the harpers' airs in his *Ancient Music of Ireland* (1796). Bunting, who had read the work of Scottish folklorists, labelled these tunes as 'ancient' and described their preservation as 'a debt every man owes his country'.¹⁶⁷ Bunting's collection was closer to the integrationist approach of European composers than folklore collectors. The tunes he preserved were not predominantly peasant songs, but rather a high art that no longer enjoyed its

¹⁶² Gelbart, *Invention*, pp. 177-179.

¹⁶³ Anderson, *Imagined*, p. 74; P. Morgan, 'From Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romanic Period' in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 59.

¹⁶⁴ Brăiloiu, *Problems*, p. 35.

¹⁶⁵ Morgan, 'Death', p. 57.

¹⁶⁶ Gelbart, *Invention*, pp. 218-221.

¹⁶⁷ Comerford, *Ireland*, p. 184; D. Cooper, "'Twas one of those dreams that by music are bought": The development of the piano and the preservation of Irish traditional music' in M. Murphy and J. Smaczny (eds.), *Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), p. 75.

previous hegemony.¹⁶⁸ He also made considerable concessions to public taste, using diatonic scales and largely keeping to the English language.¹⁶⁹ Like Bunting, the antiquarian George Petrie was familiar with Scottish initiatives.¹⁷⁰ In 1851, he was a founder of the Society for the Preservation and Publication of the Melodies of Ireland, with whom he collected folk tunes from rural communities. He published them in *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (1855).¹⁷¹ Petrie included some Gaelic songs, but they were mostly English, and he adapted his tunes for piano, although unlike Bunting he identified a hexatonic scale of six notes that he applied to Irish music.¹⁷² In 1872, historian and collector Patrick Weston Joyce produced his *Ancient Irish Music*, also in English and set for piano.¹⁷³ Joyce and Petrie, and others like them, followed the established pattern of visiting remote communities to collect ‘folk music’ directly from the people in order to preserve it.¹⁷⁴ Like their European counterparts, moreover, they translated and integrated that music into formats suitable for their audiences.

The Gaelic League, the Oireachtas and the Féis Ceoil provided unprecedented impetus to ‘Irish’ music, as activists sought to revive and preserve traditional culture. These efforts included attempts to define and promote authentic Irish music, addressing musical and extra-musical characteristics. Both the organisers of the Féis Ceoil and Douglas Hyde deemed song origins to be of greatest importance, concluding that authentic Irish songs were drawn from the ‘ancient’ traditions of Irish-speaking rural

¹⁶⁸ G. Yeats, *The Harp of Ireland: The Belfast Harpers Festival, 1792 and the saving of Ireland’s Harp Music by Edward Bunting* (Belfast, 1992), pp. 25-26.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 79-84.

¹⁷⁰ J. O’Brien Moran, ‘Irish folk music collectors of the early nineteenth century: pioneer musicologists’ in M. Murphy and J. Smaczny (eds.), *Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), p. 103.

¹⁷¹ Comerford, *Ireland*, p. 185.

¹⁷² O’Brien Moran, ‘Irish’, p. 101.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* pp. 92-95.

¹⁷⁴ B. Boydell, ‘Constructs of nationality: The literary and visual politics of Irish music in the nineteenth century’ in M. Murphy and J. Smaczny (eds.), *Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), p. 60.

communities.¹⁷⁵ For Hyde, a Protestant, these definitions advantageously provided a unifying Irish identity that pre-dated seventeenth-century Catholic/Protestant conflicts. The Gaelic League encouraged branches to visit Irish-speaking ('Gaeltacht') communities to collect Irish language songs.¹⁷⁶ Folklorists, composers and activists exchanged the songs they collected, and published them in the Gaelic League's newspaper, *An Claidheamh Soluis*.¹⁷⁷ In subject matter, authentic Irish songs were non-sectarian and morally pure. Hyde dismissed the only example of sectarian lyrics that he collected – a song denouncing 'Orangemen' – as an outlier.¹⁷⁸ Once again, he was at pains to include Protestants like himself in the Irish community. In 1899, furthermore, controversy over a song selected for the Féis Ceoil children's choir competition led to multiple entrants withdrawing and several committee members resigning. The song described a boy and girl kissing.¹⁷⁹ Authentic Irish music therefore originated from the oldest, most rural peoples, was non-sectarian, morally restrained, and sung in the Irish language.

Attempts to reach musicological definitions of Irish music also drew on eighteenth and early nineteenth-century precedents, Irish and transnational. According to the 1897 Féis Ceoil programme, authentic Irish harp music had a 'gapped scale of "D"' without the notes of F and B (a pentatonic scale), and Pipe music a scale of C gapped at C and B, or E minor with a D and C natural.¹⁸⁰ By identifying these scales, revivalists differentiated Irish music from European art music, but otherwise they did not expand upon their

¹⁷⁵ D. Hyde, *Love Songs of Connacht* (London, 1895), pp. v-ix; *The Proposed Irish Music Festival – Report of the Honorary Secretaries* (Dublin, 1895).

¹⁷⁶ National University of Ireland Galway Archives (henceforth NUIGA), Bairéad Collection, G3/296.

¹⁷⁷ NLI, Pearse Papers, MS 21,047.

¹⁷⁸ D. Hyde, *Religious Songs of Connacht* (Dublin, 1906), pp. 11, 261.

¹⁷⁹ NLI, Féis Ceoil Papers, MS 34,916.

¹⁸⁰ *Programme of the Féis Ceoil, 1897, Dublin* (Dublin, 1897).

connotations. The definitions that theorists articulated most widely concerned those instruments considered authentically Irish. Féis organisers regularly selected harps, fiddles and pipes for competitions.¹⁸¹ The 1897 Féis Ceoil programme described the tone of the Irish pipes as softer than Scottish equivalents. It also contrasted pipes with foreign brass instruments. By the pipes' 'tones', it said, 'the Irish are stirred up to fight in the same manner as the soldiers of other nations by the trumpet'.¹⁸² This opposition between 'authentic' Irish music and the brass and orchestras of foreign music is a common theme in accounts of the revival. Rosamund Jacob, a nationalist and Gaelic League member in Waterford, wrote after a féis in 1910 that she would 'rather hear a good band of war pipers than the finest orchestra in the world'.¹⁸³ Revivalists were especially concerned about popular English music. The pipes and harp, wrote one author, did not have any suggestion of 'the low comic'; another called for 'ballads in Irish' to replace 'trashy comic songs'.¹⁸⁴ The 'vulgar English entertainments' of commercial 'music halls' were encroaching upon modest, Catholic Irish cultures.¹⁸⁵ Music hall songs often conveyed derogatory 'stage Irish' stereotypes, reinforcing these antagonisms. When W. B. Yeats attended a masonic concert with his uncle in 1898, he responded to a 'stage Irishman song' by hissing at the performer.¹⁸⁶ When Catholic priest Father Gunning gave a speech to the Foxford Gaelic League he warned that there was 'not an hour to be lost in the process of de-Anglicizing ourselves. Look at our local

¹⁸¹ *Féis Ceoil, 1898, Belfast; Féis Ceoil, 1897, Dublin; Syllabus of the Munster Féis* (Cork, 1911), p. 5.

¹⁸² *Féis Ceoil, 1897, Dublin*.

¹⁸³ NLI, RJD, MS 32,582/21.

¹⁸⁴ *The Oireachtas: Proceedings 1897* (Dublin, 1897), pp. 85, 92.

¹⁸⁵ McGarry, *Abbey*, p. 66.

¹⁸⁶ W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats Vol. II: 1896-1900* (Oxford, 2004), p. 289-290.

concerts, English songs, and worse than all, English music hall songs'.¹⁸⁷ Francis Fahy, London Gaelic League President, wrote:

[T]he pipers are as scarce as blackbirds, the fiddler is becoming rarer and rarer. Instead of them the concertina and accordion now send the sensitive fairies to flight from many an Irish village... Our concert halls are, if possible, on a lower and more shameless level than their cockney prototypes.¹⁸⁸

In Fahy's conception, Irish instrumentation (pipes, fiddles) was undermined morally and musically by cultures imported from London's depraved urban environment.

The consistency with which revivalist musical culture adhered to its own definitions varied. Indeed, its inconsistency was one of its greatest strengths. The transnational influence of cosmopolitan London added significant impetus to the revival, as Fahy's presidency of the London Gaelic League suggests. In London, Irish and other Celtic revivals interacted, with the result that Fahy described Irish culture as 'the sister of Scotch Gaelic and Manx, first cousin of the Welsh and Breton'.¹⁸⁹ The Irish Folksong Society was formed in London in 1891. Members of that society went on to sit on organising committees and adjudication panels for the Féis Ceoil, Oireachtas, and Gaelic League.¹⁹⁰ Foreign stimulus was matched by foreign features. Performers rarely observed pentatonic scales; even the 'Rallying Song of the Gaelic League' ('Go Mairidh Ar nGaedhilg Slán'), adopted at the first Oireachtas, used a diatonic scale.¹⁹¹

Correspondents in *An Claidheamh Soluis* also debated Irish instrumentation. One

¹⁸⁷ *An Claidheamh Soluis* (henceforth *Claidheamh*), 6th May 1899.

¹⁸⁸ F. Fahy, *The Irish Language Movement* (London, 1901), pp. 10-11.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ A. P. Graves, *To Return to All That* (London, 1930), p. 208; *Oireachtas* (1897), p. 3.

¹⁹¹ *Oireachtas* (1897), p. 61.

questioned rigid definitions. '[W]e are all' he wrote, 'proud of our music, we are proud of it whether it comes from pipes, harp or fiddle. Indeed, the instruments, I think, should be considered a secondary matter'.¹⁹² Such attitudes were not isolated. An 'Irish Language Procession' in Dublin in 1904, included several brass bands.¹⁹³ Gaelic League performances even incorporated music hall. Several correspondents to *An Claidheamh Soluis* complained about hearing music hall songs at League meetings.¹⁹⁴ Brian O'Higgins, a League member in Dublin, recalled his popular performances of songs in a music hall style. O'Higgins wrote comic songs on 'seoníns' (bourgeois elements perceived as aspiring to Englishness), for instance 'The Seonín Maids of Eirinn'. 'I have seen' he wrote, 'crowds rocking with laughter as that song was sung by someone dressed up like a dude, with shabby dress suit, top hat, monocle spats, yellow gloves... and imitation English accents, making the complete and perfect seonín'.¹⁹⁵ The combination of comic performance and the elaborate character is heavily reminiscent of music hall. O'Higgins thus appropriated English culture to a Gaelic cause. Likewise, many tolerated English language songs. Pádraig Breathnach, who collected folksongs from Cork, Waterford and Kerry, wrote that to fight 'the spirit of Anglicisation' there was 'no more effective barrier' after the Irish language and Irish songs, than 'Anglo-Irish ballads and songs'.¹⁹⁶ The Gaelic League recommended in 1909 that féis committees insist upon performers singing 'at least' one song in Irish, but that implied the remainder could be in English.¹⁹⁷ Hyde saw songs presented in both languages as useful tools for learning Irish, writing that translating Irish songs into English could 'be

¹⁹² *Claidheamh*, 20th May 1899.

¹⁹³ NUIGA, Bairéad Collection, G3/378.

¹⁹⁴ *Claidheamh*, 21st Oct. 1899; *Claidheamh*, 9th Sept. 1899.

¹⁹⁵ B. O'Higgins, *My Songs and Myself* (Dublin, 1949), pp. 62-63, 81.

¹⁹⁶ P. Breathnach, *Songs of the Gael: A Collection of Anglo-Irish Songs and Ballads Wedded to Old Traditional Irish Airs* (Dublin, 1915).

¹⁹⁷ NLI, Oireachtas na Gaeilge Papers, MS G 1,324/1.

of some advantage to that present increasing class of Irishmen who take a just pride in their native language'.¹⁹⁸

Historians in recent years have demonstrated that the League deliberately avoided explicitly political nationalism before 1915.¹⁹⁹ However, long before then, it utilised nationalist music's separatist rhetoric, augmenting its popular appeal. Rosamund Jacob described a Gaelic League concert in December 1910 that concluded with a communal rendition in English of 'A Nation Once Again'.²⁰⁰ Branches also regularly reported members singing nationalist songs in Irish at meetings, as in Kiltimagh in April 1899 when a singer performed an Irish version of 'Memory of the Dead'.²⁰¹ The Féis Ceoil also utilised nationalist balladry to promote the Irish language and create an appealing repertoire. Féis Ceoil programmes placed English and Gaelic lyrics side by side, facilitating learning, many of which were nationalist songs. Its competitions, too, included nationalist ballads.²⁰² Nationalist music had a popular appeal, making it a natural means through which to ease audiences into Gaelic revivalism. Like Hyde's definitions of a shared, ancient culture, performing nationalist songs at Gaelic League gatherings was a method by which to insist on the common heritage of Catholics and Protestants. Roger Casement, a Gaelic League member in Ulster, described a Belfast League meeting at which fellow nationalist F. J. Biggar sang 'God Save Ireland' and then chanted 'No Surrender' (a unionist slogan). As Roy Foster states, this invocation of the symbols of both nationalists and unionists in Ulster spoke to Biggar's hope that

¹⁹⁸ Hyde, *Love*, p. v.

¹⁹⁹ McMahan, *Grand*, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ NLI, RJD, 27th Dec. 1910, MS 32,582/21.

²⁰¹ *Claidheamh*, 29th Apr. 1899.

²⁰² *Programme of the Féis Ceoil, 1898, Belfast* (Belfast, 1898).

through a shared Gaelic identity his ‘traditionally minded unionist relatives could be converted to pluralist nationalism’.²⁰³

Like political nationalists, revivalists used music to create participatory entertainments. Concerts attracted wider audiences than language classes alone. The Gaelic League advised branches that concerts could encourage ‘non-studying members’ to participate more actively.²⁰⁴ Féiseanna attracted detailed newspaper reports, increasing the League's public profile.²⁰⁵ The appeal of competition is evident in branch reports sent to *An Claidheamh Soluis*. In March 1899, the Macroom branch reported that they had spent a great deal of time preparing songs for an upcoming féis, while in April the West End (Belfast) branch boasted of its recent spate of competition victories.²⁰⁶ Most prominently, the Oireachtas was billed as a national festival, a ‘rallying point’ for the ‘preservation of the national language of Ireland’. The festival included competitions in singing, harping and piping, as well as dancing and speaking. Like other aspects of the revival, the Oireachtas had transnational influences. It was openly modelled on the ‘excellent results which our Welsh friends’ achieved at the Eisteddfod, a delegation of whom attended the 1897 Oireachtas.²⁰⁷ The Oireachtas was an expensive annual publicity exercise, but more broadly musical culture was financially beneficial for the language movement (in contrast to its anti-commercial rhetoric).²⁰⁸ Most féiseanna, as *An Claidheamh Soluis* put it, were ‘self-supporting, and have in some cases yielded a substantial addition to the funds of the branch’.²⁰⁹ The League sold songbooks for the

²⁰³ Foster, *Vivid*, pp. 195-196.

²⁰⁴ *Oireachtas* (1897), p. 84.

²⁰⁵ *Kerryman*, 23rd Jan. 1906.

²⁰⁶ *Claidheamh*, 18th Mar. 1899; *Claidheamh*, 1st Apr. 1899.

²⁰⁷ *Oireachtas* (1897), p. 15.

²⁰⁸ NUIGA, Bairéad Collection, G3/377.

²⁰⁹ *Claidheamh*, 8th Apr. 1899.

same purpose, at a good profit margin, as well as advertising space in *An Claidheamh Soluis* to music retailers.²¹⁰ The GAA, likewise, used bands and concerts to attract publicity and fundraise. A GAA concert in Naas in 1889 lasted from 10pm until 6.40am the following morning, illustrating musical culture's public appeal.²¹¹ Making money often meant further compromises to public taste. Although féiseanna primarily aimed to promote the language, and in theory competitors were required to demonstrate a certain standard of the Irish language before they could compete, in practice organisers often failed to enforce these tests.²¹² At the Oireachtas in 1913, pipers and competitors aged over thirty were exempt from language tests.²¹³ *The Leader*, a hard-line nationalist publication, criticised féiseanna for their lack of truly Irish songs.²¹⁴ The proliferation of organised and entertaining events, the appeal of competition, and a willingness to compromise, even if criticised in some quarters, made a major contribution to the Gaelic League's appeal.

Although most of the organisers of the Féis Ceoil were Gaelic League members, or at least shared its ideals, the Féis Ceoil and the Oireachtas had different aims. The two were held as a joint event in 1897, but thereafter diverged.²¹⁵ Where the latter focussed on the language and 'traditional' culture, the Féis Ceoil promoted Irish art music. It included competitions for brass instruments and for the performance of songs by foreign composers.²¹⁶ The 1898 Féis Ceoil, furthermore, hosted a performance of Beethoven's

²¹⁰ NUIGA, Bairéad Collection, G3/265; NUIGA, Bairéad Collection, G3/364.

²¹¹ Gaelic Athletic Association Archive (henceforth GAAA), John Dillon (Naas) Minute Book, 6th Mar. 1889, Naas/01/01.

²¹² UCDA, Eoin MacNeill Papers, LA1/72.

²¹³ NUIGA, Bairéad Collection, G3/527.

²¹⁴ M. Murphy, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in M. Murphy and J. Smaczny (eds.), *Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), p. 277.

²¹⁵ *Oireachtas* (1897).

²¹⁶ NLI, Féis Ceoil Papers, MS 34,916.

Fifth Symphony.²¹⁷ As well as Gaelic League activists, its organisers included poets, professional musicians, and composers including Charles Villiers Stanford, Annie Patterson, and Alfred Perceval Graves.²¹⁸ Stanford (1852-1924) was born to a unionist family, and followed a conventional route for many European composers. He gained experience as a church organist before training formally in Germany and at Cambridge, where he later became Professor of Music. He composed on Irish themes, incorporating Irish melodies. His first opera, ‘The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan’ (1881), drew upon Thomas Moore’s ‘Lalla Rookh’, while his ‘Irish Symphony’ (1887) quoted the folk melody ‘The Londonderry Air’ (better known as the tune of ‘Danny Boy’).²¹⁹ Annie Patterson, the first woman in Britain or Ireland to receive a doctorate in music, was an organist and choirmaster in Belfast and, like Stanford, composed on Irish themes, including the ‘Rallying Song of the Gaelic League’.²²⁰ These were not revived folk tunes, but compositions of artistic intent incorporating a folk character. The Féis Ceoil’s stated goal was to promote ‘Irish music, by Irish composers’, particularly music incorporating folk tunes, as part of an ‘artistic and intellectual awakening’.²²¹ To an extent it was successful: Patterson composed her ‘Irish Cantata’ for the 1900 Féis Ceoil.²²² Nevertheless, the combination of art music and cultural nationalism alienated representatives of both traditions. Stanford, originally President, resigned after the committee refused to allow foreign orchestras to perform.²²³ Nationalist criticism took

²¹⁷ *Féis Ceoil, 1898, Belfast.*

²¹⁸ *Proposed.*

²¹⁹ M. Murphy, ‘Race, Nation and Empire in the Music of Charles Villiers Stanford’ in R. Pine (ed.), *Music in Ireland 1848-1998* (Cork, 1998), pp. 46-47; H. White, ‘Cultural theory, nostalgia and the historical record: opera in Ireland and the Irishness of opera during the nineteenth century’ in M. Murphy and J. Smaczny (eds.), *Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 28, 37.

²²⁰ Excluding honorary degrees. R. Johnston and D. Plummer, *The Musical Life of Nineteenth-Century Belfast* (Farnham, 2015), p. 6; *Oireachtas* (1897), p. 26.

²²¹ *Proposed; Programme of the Féis Ceoil* (Dublin, 1899); R. Pine, ‘Music in Ireland 1848-1998: An Overview’ in R. Pine (ed.), *Music in Ireland 1848-1998* (Cork, 1998), p. 22.

²²² *Programme of the Féis Ceoil* (Belfast, 1900).

²²³ *Proposed.*

the opposite standpoint. An article from the nationalist *United Irishman* (reprinted in *An Claidheamh Soluis*) was unfettered in its condemnation:

We cannot say that we recognise in [the Féis Ceoil] the ideal of our dreams: we cannot say that it even approaches the hopes raised when the scheme was first mooted by Dr Annie Patterson in the Gaelic League rooms three or four years since; we cannot say that it is a Gaelic festival, for a very small percentage of its features are Gaelic; we cannot say it is Irish, for but one concert is pre-eminently so, and few of the competitions either vocal or instrumental, are even the work of Irishmen. Finally, scarcely one of the prize pieces is Irish in style, subject or sympathy, and very few of them the growth of the country.²²⁴

The writer denounced the Féis Ceoil's attempts to mix foreign compositions, art music of Irish composition, and Irish music. Such divisions illustrate both the wide-ranging nature of the musical revival and the implicit radicalisation of Irish culture.

Irish musical revivals therefore drew on transnational innovations to cultivate definitions of Irish music that were autochthonous, ancient, rural, and anti-materialistic. Those definitions were flexible and disputed, evidenced in the divergent approaches of the Oireachtas and the Féis Ceoil. Above all, music attracted audiences to the language movement. As such, the Gaelic movement appropriated English language songs, nationalist balladry, and music hall. Far from rejecting commercialism, its employment of commercial methods benefitted its cause. In many ways, the greatest strength of the Gaelic revival was not that it rejected modern culture, but that it harnessed it. Rather than de-Anglicising Irish musical culture, the revival Gaelicised British musical culture.

²²⁴ *Claidheamh*, 27th May 1899.

2

‘Great Men and Straight Men’? Music and the Irish Revolution, 1913-1923

I

Music, Radicalisation and Revolution, 1913-1921

Nationalist politics became increasingly radical after 1913. A new generation of Republican, ‘advanced’ nationalist activists, dissatisfied with constitutionalists who appeared to have achieved little despite decades of campaigning, were spurred on by new political ideas (including Gaelic revivalism, women’s suffrage, and socialism) to turn against the politics of their parents’ generation. The rhetoric of rebellion soon gave way to reality. In 1912, unionists in Ulster formed the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), intent on sheltering Ulster from Home Rule. The IRB and the organisers of the Fianna Éireann (the nationalist boy scouts) formed the Irish Volunteers, a nationalist equivalent, in 1913. The same year saw a ‘General Lockout’ in Dublin over the right of workers to unionise, and the formation of the Irish Citizen Army as a socialist defence force. In 1900, the women’s nationalist and feminist organisation that would become Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland) met for the first time. The more explicitly Republican Cumann na mBan followed in 1914.¹ The First World War delayed Home Rule, but Redmond and his party supported the British war effort. Most of the Volunteers followed, but the movement split into the Redmondite ‘National Volunteers’ and the Republican ‘Irish Volunteers’. In 1916, the latter (with the Citizen

¹ S. Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 33, 128, 141.

Army) staged a short, failed uprising in Dublin, the Easter Rising, for which its leaders were executed. This, and more importantly the threat of conscription, encouraged a rapid increase in support for Sinn Féin, an advanced nationalist political party formed by writer and nationalist Arthur Griffith in 1905. After 1916, the party became the political vehicle for the rebels, led by the Rising's most senior survivor, Éamon de Valera. In 1918, Sinn Féin won a landslide victory in Irish constituencies and unilaterally declared an independent legislature (the Dáil Éireann). From 1919, under the direction of Easter rebels Michael Collins and Cathal Brugha, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) – intended as a successor organisation to the Irish Volunteers – pursued a war against Britain (the Anglo-Irish War). Consequently, in 1921 the British government and the rebels agreed to create an autonomous Irish dominion, excluding the six predominantly Protestant north-eastern counties.

The First World War created new soundscapes across Britain and Ireland.

Approximately 25 per cent of music hall songs written during the period were about the War; they were usually patriotic. Halls also provided sites of national nostalgia and solidarity, a practice encouraged by the service personnel who swelled their audiences.²

New halls continued to open in Ireland, and hosted fundraising concerts for Belgian civilians and injured soldiers.³ Army bands performed at recruitment rallies. The band of the Irish Brigade toured Ireland in April 1915. Their staple tune was 'It's a long, long way to Tipperary', a British music hall song by Jack Judge (a singer of Irish descent). It describes a London Irishman pining for a girl at home (Tipperary); it was widely

² S. Featherstone, 'The Epitome of National Life: Metropolitan Music Hall and Variety Theatre, 1913-1919' in A. Maunder (ed.), *British Theatre and the Great War, 1914-1919* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 181, 190; J. Mullen, *The Show Must Go On: Popular Song in Britain during the First World War* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 4, 87.

³ *Killarney Echo*, 14th Nov. 1914; *Newsletter*, 8th Apr. 1915; *Newsletter*, 5th Jun. 1916.

adopted in the army during the War.⁴ The Irish Brigade's band attracted crowds and media attention, increasing publicity for recruiters calling for listeners to 'carry out the desire of John Redmond and sign up'.⁵ The idea that army service assisted nationalist aspirations was consistent with Redmond's rationale for supporting the War. He held that Ireland's contribution would prove Ireland loyal to Empire, cementing Home Rule's future. This was reflected in the recruitment campaign's use of music. An advert printed in several newspapers in June 1915 was headed 'God Save Ireland'. 'When you sing these [words] you think you really mean them', it stated. 'But since the War began what have you done to make them a reality?':

If you are an Irishman between the age of 19 and 40, physically fit and not already serving your country as a sailor or a soldier or in the munition factory, there is but one way for you to help to save Ireland from the Germans... you must join an Irish regiment and learn to sing "God Save Ireland" with a gun in your hand.

The final caption read 'God Save the King! God Save Ireland!'.⁶ The advert illustrates starkly how easily songs were appropriated by causes dramatically different from their original intention. Recruiters sought to harness nationalist support for the War and throw the weight of Irish history behind its pursuit. When members of the National Volunteers enlisted, the performances of the organisation's bands implied similar support. In November 1914, the Fermoy National Volunteers band played 'A Nation Once Again' as hundreds of their number arrived at their army barracks.⁷ Army service,

⁴ "'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary": An Army Marching-Song', *The Musical Times*, 55 (862) (1914), pp. 696-697.

⁵ *Independent*, 4th Apr. 1915; *Examiner*, 10th Apr. 1915; *Independent*, 19th Apr. 1915; *Sentinel*, 21st Apr. 1915.

⁶ *Kerry News* (henceforth *News*), 18th Jun. 1915; *Munster Express* (henceforth *Munster*), 19th Jun. 1915; *Evening*, 19th Jun. 1915; *Skibbereen Eagle* (henceforth *Skibbereen*), 19th Jun. 1915; *Kerry Advocate*, 19th Jun. 1915.

⁷ *Examiner*, 26th Nov. 1914.

these performances suggested, was consistent with and beneficial to nationalist aims. However, this view became increasingly problematic as war continued.

The political, commemorative and revivalist musical cultures outlined in Chapter One expressed and contributed to radical nationalism's development. Revolutionaries cited music's influence frequently. In their Bureau of Military History statements, several claimed to have participated in the first performance of the future national anthem, the 'Soldier's Song', in their locality.⁸ Whether or not all were accurate, their desire to associate themselves with a national symbol is a reminder that these statements are narratives constructed with a view to the protagonist's place in a national myth. Music recurs in narratives of the period as a trigger for national awareness. Speaking in 1952, P. S. O'Hegarty described hearing 'the music' at a Cork féis in 1902 as a 'revelation' after which he 'felt [himself] to be part of the Gael'.⁹ These descriptions of inspiration are common in retrospect, but it would be reductive to suggest that nationalist music created revolutionaries. Activists often refer to music in their contemporary accounts (detailed below), both as a creative exercise and a political symbol, but it was only with hindsight that they pinpointed musical experiences as moments of conversion.

Songwriting was important to the political careers of many advanced nationalists. These included specialist lyricists and musicians as well as those who were primarily activists but occasionally wrote songs (e.g. the journalist Alice Milligan, or Constance

⁸ J. O'Connor, Bureau of Military History (henceforth BMH) (WS Ref. #157), p. 12; E. Morkan, BMH (WS Ref. #411), p. 19; T. Crowley, BMH (WS Ref. #435), p. 19; E. O'Brien, BMH (WS Ref. #597), p. 4; M. Brennan, BMH (WS Ref. #1068), p. 7; T. O'Donoghue, BMH (WS Ref. #1666), p. 3; P. Kelly, BMH (WS Ref. #781), p. 43.

⁹ Foster, *Vivid*, pp. 49-50.

Markievicz, a revolutionary nationalist, suffragist, and Fianna Éireann founder).¹⁰ As demonstrated, many nineteenth-century nationalist songwriters were ambiguous in their actual support for the revolutionary violence that they romanticised. Contrastingly, the songwriters of the revolutionary period were almost universally active supporters of advanced nationalism and physical resistance. Both Peadar Kearney and Paddy Heaney, lyricist and composer of the 'Soldier's Song' respectively, were Gaelic League members.¹¹ According to his nephew and biographer, playwright Séamus de Búrca, Kearney said that his father was an ardent nationalist.¹² While working at the Abbey Theatre as a prop master and supporting actor, Kearney began songwriting.¹³ He joined the IRB in 1902 and brought several others into the organisation (recorded in their Bureau of Military History Statements).¹⁴ According to Seamus Kavanagh, Kearney organised the Fianna Éireann pipe band.¹⁵ Kearney participated in the Rising in Jacob's Factory, as corroborated by Thomas Pugh.¹⁶ In 1920, shortly after the birth of his first son, named Pearse, Kearney was imprisoned in Ballykinlar internment camp alongside hundreds of his revolutionary colleagues, where he remained until the end of the Anglo-Irish War.¹⁷

Kearney was a representative example. Songwriter William Rooney died before 1916, but he was an IRB member who contributed songs to nationalist newspapers, the 1798

¹⁰ Kilmainham Gaol (henceforth KG), 'A Battle Hymn by Constance Markievicz', 18MUIC1429; *The Ninety-Eight Songbook* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 25.

¹¹ S. de Búrca, *The Soldier's Song: The Story of Peadar Ó Cearnaigh* (Dublin, 1957), pp. 40, 51.

¹² NLI, Séamus de Búrca Papers (henceforth SDB), MS 39,125/2.

¹³ Búrca, *Soldier's*, pp. 61, 67; NLI, SDB, MS 39,125/2.

¹⁴ NLI, SDB, MS 39,125/2; T. Pugh, BMH (WS Ref. #397), p. 21; T. Slater, BMH (WS Ref. #263), p. 1.

¹⁵ S. Kavanagh, BMH (WS Ref. #1670), p. 7.

¹⁶ Búrca, *Soldier's*, pp. 113-129; T. Pugh, BMH, p. 6.

¹⁷ P. Kearney, *My Dear Eva: Letters Written from Ballykinlar Internment Camp* (Dublin, 1976); NLI, SDB, MS 39,125/1.

centenary, and the nationalist Celtic Literary Society in Dublin.¹⁸ Maeve Cavanagh, who wrote songs for nationalist and socialist propaganda, joined the Gaelic League and the Citizen Army.¹⁹ Brian O'Higgins wrote songs for the Fianna Éireann, the Gaelic League, and the Volunteers. He was also among those who occupied the General Post Office (GPO) during the Rising.²⁰ He was interned in Frongoch internment camp, Wales, in the aftermath.²¹ Publisher and songwriter J. J. Walsh participated in the Rising in the GPO. Afterwards, he was imprisoned and went on hunger strike.²² Joseph Stanley published, wrote and composed several songs.²³ Easter rebel Sean Prendergast listed Stanley among those present in the GPO in 1916 and he appears in the records of the Frongoch Prisoners.²⁴ Jimmy Mulherns, who wrote the satirical song 'Come Along and Join the British Army' (discussed below), was also imprisoned in Frongoch, where his eccentric costumes and comic music hall parodies earned him his nickname, the 'Rajah of Frongoch'.²⁵ Joseph Crofts, finally, wrote accompaniments to several songs and was an officer in the Volunteers.²⁶ These songwriters, among the most prolific of the revolutionary generation, were directly and enthusiastically involved in radical politics and physical resistance.

For others, the participatory, political musical cultures encouraged by constitutional, cultural and radical nationalists alike provided accessible material through which to

¹⁸ A. Griffith, *William Rooney: Poems and Ballads* (Dublin, 1902), pp. xix-xxxii.

¹⁹ M. Cavanagh-McDowell, BMH (WS Ref. #258), p. 2.

²⁰ J. Kavanagh, BMH (WS Ref. #889), p. 13; B. O'Higgins, *The Soldier's Story of Easter Week* (Dublin, 1966), p. 22; S. Prendergast, BMH (WS Ref. #755), p. 147.

²¹ O'Higgins, *Soldier's*, pp. 38-39; NLI, Sean O'Mahoney Papers, MS 44,039/3; NLI, Henry Dixon Correspondence, MS 35,262 (4); NAI, Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers, 23397/16.

²² J. J. Walsh, *Recollections of a Rebel* (Tralee, 1944), pp. 33, 41, 47.

²³ CO 904/37/738.

²⁴ Prendergast, BMH, p. 21; NLI, Irish Prisoners of War Minute Book, POS1638; NLI, Autograph Letters Signed Collection, MS 49,491.

²⁵ Interview with Val Mulherns (b. 1925), Oxford, 2014.

²⁶ S. Kavanagh, BMH (WS Ref. #1053), p. 2.

explore nationalist ideologies. Rosamund Jacob, who co-founded the Waterford branch of Sinn Féin in 1906, grew up surrounded by nationalist music.²⁷ In 1901, aged 13, her brother gave her a copy of Moore's *Melodies* for Christmas.²⁸ In 1902 she and her parents attended a meeting addressed by John Redmond, joining in a communal rendition of 'God Save Ireland'.²⁹ For the nationalist Celtic Literary Society, which met regularly in the late nineteenth century, communal singing was also important. Their members, including Arthur Griffith, William Rooney, and Terence MacSwiney, who died on hunger strike in 1920, sang nationalist songs during meetings (often in Irish). They repeated an Irish translation of 'God Save Ireland' particularly often.³⁰ Through the communal selection and performance of songs, they thus constructed shared ideals and identities. Similarly, future Sinn Féin MP Liam de Róiste recorded several instances in 1904 of the Cork Celtic Literary Society organising concerts featuring "rebel songs", songs in Irish, [and] Irish music'.³¹ Michael Mallin, conversely, came to nationalism via the musical cultures of the British army. Mallin was inspired to enlist by the local regiment's band, of which he became drummer. He was radicalised by his experiences in India, became an active socialist, and conducted the bands of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) and the Citizen Army before being executed in 1916 for his role in the Rising.³² That Mallin's experience of British army musical culture smoothed his transition into radical Irish politics demonstrates the extent to which the latter drew upon the qualities of the former.

²⁷ Foster, *Vivid*, p. 407.

²⁸ NLI, RJD, 25th Dec. 1901, MS 32,582/3; NLI, RJD, 5th May 1901, MS 32,582/4.

²⁹ NLI, RJD, 12th Sept. 1902, MS 32,582/2.

³⁰ NLI, Minute Book of the Celtic Literary Society, MS 200/147.

³¹ CCCA, Liam de Róiste Diaries (henceforth LDRD), 5th Oct. 1914, U271/A/3.

³² B. Hughes, *16 Lives: Michael Mallin* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 20-22, 36, 53-54.

Music was also conspicuous in the education of the revolutionaries. Several members of Inghinidhe na hÉireann formed a choir, and as part of their children's classes arranged for the choirmaster to teach Irish music and singing.³³ The Christian Brothers' schools that educated many future rebels encouraged nationalist songs.³⁴ Pádraic Pearse, one of those executed in 1916, likewise envisioned music including the harp, pipes and violin, as an important aspect of the curriculum at his school in Dublin (St Enda's) from its conception.³⁵ The school had an official march played on the pipes which accompanied the pupils' parades and 'military drill'.³⁶ Pupils also staged plays depicting nationalist heroes that included songs in Gaelic and English.³⁷ Pearse thus harnessed the martial connotations of marching music, and the cultural revival's definitions of Irish music, to create a seemingly Irish education for a cohort of potential rebels. Responses to the school's musical culture suggest that he was successful. In the women's nationalist newspaper, *Bean na hÉireann*, the nationalist, feminist and journalist Sidney Gifford wrote of one St Enda's Pageant:

A word of special praise is due to the musicians who helped so much to add to the picture of the performance... The pipes, too, sounded at their best in the open air, and the accompanying sound of marching feet was most inspiring. We all felt that we could conquer the world if we were only led on to victory by such music.³⁸

One might compare Gifford's comments to Robert Emmet's desire to lead an army marching to Thomas Moore's 'Let Erin Remember', a remarkable comparison considering that Gifford was responding to a children's play.

³³ NLI, Sydney Czira Papers, MS 18,817/16/1.

³⁴ *A Century of Catholic Education: Brother Burke and his Associates* (Dublin, 1916), p. 126.

³⁵ NLI, Material Relating to Constance Markievicz, Pádraic Pearse, and others, MS 49,851.

³⁶ Pearse Museum, *Sgoil Eanna Pageant Programme* (Dublin, 1909).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Bean na hÉireann* (henceforth *Bean*) 1 (9) (July 1909).

In the early stages of their activism, music also provided nationalists with subjects and grievances on which to pontificate and exercise political energies. Arthur Griffith published two books in 1914 on the songs of Thomas Davis and William Rooney.³⁹ Roger Casement, executed in 1916, engaged with nationalism through music before his involvement in physical resistance. Casement wrote an essay encouraging Irish schools to emulate Danish equivalents in performing a 'national or religious song' before lectures. He argued that doing so could revive the nation's 'spiritual life', reversing the effect of national schools that had 'very nearly killed Ireland'.⁴⁰ Liam de Róiste criticised Gaelic League colleagues who, he felt, failed to adequately condemn the use of 'foreign' music at féiseanna.⁴¹ Terence MacSwiney, likewise, found in music an outlet for his nationalist inclinations. Reflecting on students who sang 'God Save Ireland' when instructed to sing 'God Save the King' as part of a protest demanding more resources for University College Dublin in 1905, he wrote:⁴²

God Save the King must be fought wherever and whenever it raises its head in this little isle of ours; it has no place here or should have none when it bides a while it must be our duty to quench it, rout it – eject it – whatever you will – but let it not be heard amongst us. Let those who want it – betake themselves to London and chant it there – but there it must be.⁴³

For MacSwiney, the British national anthem symbolised oppression. By condemning it he articulated his political standpoint. For individuals attracted to nationalism, music facilitated exploration and expression of their ideology in their formative years and

³⁹ Griffith, *William*; A. Griffith, *Thomas Davis: The Thinker and Teacher, The Essence of His Writings in Prose and Poetry* (Dublin, 1914).

⁴⁰ NLI, 'Therefore it is I am with the Danes' (c. 1904-1908), Roger Casement Papers, MS 13,089/2/6.

⁴¹ CCCA, LDRD, 17th Jun. 1906, U271/A/9.

⁴² S. Pašeta, *Thomas Kettle* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 21-22.

⁴³ UCDA, TMB, P48c/102/6.

provided an early medium through which they encountered nationalist ideals. It also allowed them to form relationships with likeminded individuals. Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh, an actress and advanced nationalist activist, recalled that at ‘national concerts... one met enthusiasts, young people drawn from every side of the city’s life, leaders or followers of all the little clubs and societies’.⁴⁴ While music may not have provided the inspiration with which it is occasionally credited, it did contribute to an advanced nationalist social context; a background influence around which activists converged.

Music was a form of nationalist activity that was open to women. Across the UK, suffrage campaigners wrote and published songs, organised concerts, and sang songs at protests for higher pay and voting reform as a communal, morale-boosting activity.⁴⁵ In Ireland, women had long performed as ballad singers, reflected in the number of first-person ballads with female protagonists; William Allingham also noted several female singers in his 1852 article.⁴⁶ Women wrote songs; notably Mary Eva Kelly, who contributed to the *Nation*.⁴⁷ The combination of suffrage periodicals, women’s nationalist organisations and cultural revival created an unprecedented number of opportunities in music for nationalist women in the period before 1916. Women performed at féiseanna, the Oireachtas, and at concerts for the Irish Volunteers.⁴⁸ At a Volunteer concert in 1918, Molly O’Sheehan (an advanced nationalist activist) gave what Irish Volunteer Sean O’Neill described as ‘an excellent concert’ with nationalist

⁴⁴ McGarry, *Abbey*, p. 16.

⁴⁵ E. Crawford, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866-1928* (London, 2001), pp. 266, 416, 506; E. Gordon, ‘Women, Work and Collective Action: Dundee Jute Workers 1870-1906’, *Journal of Social History*, 21 (1) (1987), p. 35.

⁴⁶ Allingham, ‘Irish’, pp. 361-363.

⁴⁷ Trinity College Dublin Archive (henceforth TCDA), John Dillon Papers, MS 6,461.

⁴⁸ *Bean* 1 (11) (Aug. 1909).

songs.⁴⁹ Inghinidhe na hÉireann and Cumann na mBan were among the first advanced nationalist organisations to hold fundraising concerts for ‘the purchase of arms’.⁵⁰ Nationalist, feminist and socialist women including Markievicz, Maureen Delany, Lena Birmingham and most prolifically Maeve Cavanagh, wrote and published songs.⁵¹ Markievicz condemned Thomas Moore, among others, for the feeble and passive presentation of women in his songs.⁵² Writing lyrics was thus in itself a statement about women’s contribution to nationalism. Predominantly, it was women and women’s journalism that promoted these efforts, but Cavanagh’s songs particularly were also included in nationalist publications more broadly.⁵³ Their songs dealt partly with women’s experiences in marriage or the workplace, and some of women’s experience of nationalism (‘To battle marched her sons again’) but were dominated by songs similar in style to those written by men.⁵⁴ Maeve Cavanagh’s ‘An Old Picture of ‘98’, for example, commemorated 1798.⁵⁵ Music, therefore, provided experiences that were shared by men and women. There were limitations. Female songwriters were heavily outnumbered by male equivalents. As stated, moreover, feminist lyrics were less common than nationalist ones. Nevertheless, music was one avenue through which women participated in advanced nationalism, contributing to cultural revival, propaganda and armed resistance.

⁴⁹ S. O’Neill, BMH (WS Ref. #1219), p. 69; CO 904/37/690.

⁵⁰ CCCA, LDRD, 17th Sept. 1902, U271/A/1; CCCA, LDRD, 23rd Jan. 1915, U271/A/17; NLI, Memoirs of Eithne Coyle, MS 28,818/1.

⁵¹ *Bean* 1 (3); *Bean* 1 (11); *Bean* 1 (18); *Bean* 1 (21); CO 904/37/693.

⁵² K. Steele, *Women, Press, and Politics during the Irish Revival* (Syracuse, 2007), p. 127.

⁵³ CO 904/37/777.

⁵⁴ *Bean* 1 (21).

⁵⁵ *Bean* 1 (14).

Socialism, like feminism, was part of but ultimately subordinate to nationalism in the soundscape of pre-revolutionary Ireland. Music was widespread within the labour movement; government reports on ITGWU meetings during the 1913 Lockout describe bands at every meeting.⁵⁶ The Citizen Army also used socialist songs as marching songs, including ‘Watchword of Labour’ by James Connolly, the Labour Party founder who was executed in 1916.⁵⁷

Oh! Hear ye the watchword of Labour!
 The slogan of they would be free,
 That no more to any enslaver.
 Must labour bend suppliant knee.
 That we on whose shoulders are borne.
 The pomp and the pride of the great.
 Whose toil they repay with their scorn.
 Must challenge and master our fate.⁵⁸

This opening stanza invokes socialist rhetoric, calling for workers not to ‘bend suppliant knee’ to ‘any enslaver’ or ‘the great’. Its Victorian masculine language illustrates the common cultural context in which these songs operated. In its militant musical style too, it resembles British army and Irish nationalist marching music, consisting primarily of tonic and dominant chords with a simple, engaging *tempo di marcia* (marching tempo) and a *crescendo* to a *fortissimo* (very loud). Socialists also appropriated nationalist music. At the Irish Volunteers’ inaugural meeting in 1913, the *Freeman’s Journal* reported that sections of the crowd chorused an alternative version of ‘God Save Ireland’, ‘God Save Larkin’, named for ITGWU leader James Larkin.⁵⁹ Most often, socialists employed nationalist songs. International socialist anthems were rare.

⁵⁶ CO 904/159/325-388.

⁵⁷ F. Robbins, BMH (WS Ref. #585), p. 10; F. Robbins, *Under the Starry Plough* (Dublin, 1977), pp. 46-47.

⁵⁸ KG, ‘The Watchword of Labour’, 13MUIC1408.

⁵⁹ *Freeman’s*, 26th Nov. 1913.

‘The Red Flag’ was written by an Irishman, Jim Connell, who founded the London branch of the Land League and originally set the song to the tune of an Irish song, ‘The White Cockade’ (he despised ‘Maryland’, the tune used most commonly).⁶⁰ In 1913, Larkin’s supporters sang ‘The Red Flag’ when he visited Glasgow during the Lockout, as did crowds at a Dublin rally celebrating the Russian Revolution in 1918, but these are isolated examples.⁶¹ There are even fewer instances of ‘The Internationale’, the international left-wing anthem written in 1871. Instead, nationalism predominated. At the Dublin rally celebrating the Russian Revolution, the ‘Soldier’s Song’ was sung alternately with ‘The Red Flag’.⁶² In his memoir, the Citizen Army’s Frank Robbins listed sixteen marching songs, of which three were socialist, thirteen nationalist.⁶³ By taking socialist songs and applying nationalist lyrics, Republicans absorbed socialism into nationalism. Constance Markievicz’s ‘Fianna Battle Song’ used the tune of ‘The Red Flag’. Instead of the socialist red flag, Markievicz honoured the Irish tricolour: ‘The Tricolour is stained and red/For Ireland have our heroes bled’.⁶⁴ These musical choices suggest that both nationalists and socialists preferred to map their experiences onto narratives of national rather than class conflict. In song, these narratives interacted with and penetrated one another. The nationalist soundscape incorporated socialism, but was not overtaken by it.

The emergence of radical voices, apparently more willing (especially after 1916) to carry out the violence that nationalist music romanticised, was potentially problematic

⁶⁰ A. Boyd, *Jim Connell: Author of ‘The Red Flag’* (London, 2001), pp. 8-12.

⁶¹ P. Yeats, *Lockout: Dublin 1913* (Dublin, 2000), p. 164.

⁶² *Westmeath Examiner*, 6th Apr. 1914.

⁶³ Robbins, *Starry*, p. 46.

⁶⁴ UCDA, Eithne Coyle Papers, P61/25(2); See also ‘Arise!’ (Air ‘The Internationale’) in Kearney, *The Soldier’s Song*, pp. 29-30.

for constitutionalists. The latter criticised Sinn Féin's associations with the violence of 1916, but their music still celebrated rebellion.⁶⁵ Some wrote songs criticising Sinn Féin. 'Are You Going to Strike for Ireland's Joy or Woe?' implores 'Men of Ireland' not to be 'led away by Sinn Féin false alarms' and thus to 'save' Ireland.⁶⁶ There is no evidence that such songs were popularly adopted. Others derided the way Sinn Féin used music, or emphasised the two groups' different repertoires. After the 1918 election, former MP William O'Malley blamed the constitutionalist defeat on Sinn Féin's unethical employment of what were increasingly referred to as 'rebel songs':

[D]uring the last year by the formation of football clubs, dance clubs etc., the young people became enrolled and the singing of "rebel songs" was carefully cultivated... At all polling stations there were organised crowds of young people carrying Sinn Féin flags and singing their "Soldier's Song".

O'Malley even characterised such methods as 'terrorism'.⁶⁷ His comments are consistent with the Party's rhetoric throughout 1918. In this conception, Sinn Féiners were violent, counterproductive thugs. Whether as hopeless idealism or as intimidation, constitutionalists were anxious to externalise Sinn Féin from respectable nationalist soundscapes.

As O'Malley's comments suggest, the 'Soldier's Song' was the primary example on which their criticisms drew. The song, written by Peadar Kearney and composed by Paddy Heeney, was published by the IRB newspaper *Irish Freedom* in September 1912,

⁶⁵ R. Davis, 'The Advocacy of Passive Resistance in Ireland, 1916-1922', *Anglo-Irish Studies* 3 (1977), pp. 35-55.

⁶⁶ *Connaught Tribune* (henceforth *Tribune*), 14th Dec. 1918.

⁶⁷ *Freeman's*, 4th Jan. 1919.

although it may have been written as early as 1907.⁶⁸ How the song was popularised before 1916 is difficult to state with certainty, but Irish Volunteers Seamus Kavanagh and Thomas O'Donoghue both recollected that it began as a Fianna marching song.⁶⁹ Several state that it was sung during the Easter Rising and in prison camps thereafter.⁷⁰ National newspapers made no mention of it until after 1916, but subsequently it became a Sinn Féin and IRA anthem. In a Republican movement that had suddenly and explicitly become violent, the militant lyrics clearly appealed:

Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland,
Some have come from the land beyond the wave,
Sworn to be free, no more our ancient sireland,
Shall shelter the despot or the slave;
Tonight we man the "bearnna baoil" [gap of danger],
In Erin's cause, come woe or weal,
'Mid-Cannon's roar and rifles peal,
We'll chant a soldier's song.⁷¹

The uplifting chorus, quoted above, is accentuated by multiple cadences and repeated use of the tonic, particularly for the striking opening line. From the starting key of B-flat major, there is a brief tonicisation of G minor as the lyrics describe the 'despot or the slave', but the stirring message is then re-emphasised by the dynamics, with a long *crescendo* before the conclusion, and by the pauses and pedalling of the piano that slow the tempo.⁷² Kearney's lyrics speak to his Fenian and Gaelic League influences. There is no hint of Catholicism, but rather an ethnic Irishness. The 'land beyond the wave' suggests that they might expect the aid of Irish-Americans. The Gaelic phrase ('bearnna

⁶⁸ *Irish Freedom*, Sept. 1912; Búrca, *Soldier's*, pp. 32, 67.

⁶⁹ S. Kavanagh, BMH, p. 8; O'Donoghue, BMH, p. 2.

⁷⁰ O'Higgins, *Soldier's*, p. 32; S. Daly, BMH (WS Ref. #360), p. 40; D. Kelly, BMH (WS Ref. #1004), p. 25.

⁷¹ CO 904/37/1067.

⁷² Kearney, *The Soldier's Song*, pp. 8-12.

baoil’) recycled that employed by Thomas Davis in ‘Clare’s Dragoons’, a translation of the common English phrase ‘gap of danger’.⁷³ These two words were little more than a token gesture, but nevertheless they root Irish identity in the language. If this implies an Anglophobic nationalism, later references to the ‘Saxon foe’ confirm it. The allusions to gunfire and sacrifice point to Kearney’s preferred method of rectifying Ireland’s wrongs. The ‘Soldier’s Song’ celebrated rebellion explicitly, but it is significant that his vision was of ‘soldiers’, rather than felons or rebels. Kearney’s revolutionaries were the legitimate representatives of a national army.

Songs satirising the Parliamentary Party were also common. Typically, satires mocked constitutionalists as outdated and complicit in conspiracies to introduce conscription. A 1918 election poster supporting J. J. Walsh and Liam de Róiste depicted an old, injured horse, branded ‘Irish Party’ on its side, under which appeared a short piece of verse: ‘He won the grand “conscription plate”,/“Home Rule” at no far distant date’.⁷⁴ Duped by promises of Home Rule, therefore, the tired constitutionalists instead obtained the consolation prize of conscription. ‘Come Along and Join the British Army’, by Jimmy Mulkerns, mocks both the British and the Parliamentary Party. Printed versions depict Mulkerns in top and tails, indicative of his music hall style.⁷⁵ Joseph Devlin is cast in the role of recruitment officer, satirising his party’s support for recruitment campaigns. Devlin’s allegiance is in little doubt, as he encourages Irishmen to serve ‘king and country’. When Devlin’s name is sung, his role as music hall villain is further underlined by accidentals and therefore dissonance, while the perfect cadence on ‘to-

⁷³ *Skibbereen*, 9th Dec. 1899; Davis, *Essays*, p. 215.

⁷⁴ TCDA, Liam de Róiste Papers, MS 10,539/278.

⁷⁵ CO 904/37/703.

morro' morn I'll have you shot' reinforces the mock-heroic tone. Mulkerns thus conveys a satirical juxtaposition between the uplifting tone and villainous caricature.⁷⁶

The distinctions drawn by both sides, however, obscure what remained strikingly similar musical strategies. The practices O'Malley classed as 'terrorism', singing at meetings and during elections, were hardly new. Certainly, the Parliamentary Party did not employ the songs being produced by the new generation of songwriters, who largely supported Sinn Féin. This meant that specific songs, notably the 'Soldier's Song', marked party allegiance. Nevertheless, their repertoires and performance practices were largely similar. Parliamentary Party supporters sang 'God Save Ireland' and 'Wearing of the Green' at rallies and commemorations (e.g. for the Manchester Martyrs), both of which endorsed physical force nationalism with the same enthusiasm as the 'Soldier's Song'; both were also included in advanced nationalist literature in 1918.⁷⁷

Constitutionalists also continued to employ bands, especially of the Hibernians, at parades supporting the party.⁷⁸ The rise of advanced nationalism did not drive the growth of two entirely distinct musical traditions. Rather, two factions sought to externalise one another from nationalist traditions and used individual songs to draw distinctions in a manner similar to that after the Parnell split, although much more explicitly. As the scarcity of new songs supporting constitutionalists suggests, this was a simpler task for advanced nationalists.

⁷⁶ CO 904/37/722.

⁷⁷ *Freeman's*, 5th Dec. 1918; *Freeman's*, 28th Oct. 1918; *Examiner*, 4th Dec. 1915; CO 904/37/1023 & 1036.

⁷⁸ *Freeman's*, 15th Aug. 1918; *Freeman's*, 16th Aug. 1921.

Music thus functioned in much the same way for Sinn Féin as for the Parliamentary Party. Supporters expressed shared ideals through communal rendition, usually the 'Soldier's Song', as at a Belfast rally in November 1918.⁷⁹ These shared performances conveyed a common identity, a 'quasi-mystical sense of community' that Jack Yeats captured in his powerful paintings depicting musicians and nationalist gatherings during the revolutionary period.⁸⁰ Likewise, bands and singing crowds used music to claim autonomy, or disrupt the autonomy of others, over space. They especially targeted recruitment meetings. In Nenagh in August 1918, crowds sang the 'Soldier's Song' to interrupt a speaker encouraging spectators to enlist.⁸¹ Parliamentary Party meetings also suffered. Sinn Féin supporters singing the 'Soldier's Song' interrupted a meeting addressed by John Dillon in January 1918.⁸² Although less commonly, Parliamentary Party supporters also targeted Sinn Féin and socialist meetings. Thomas Cleary described a 1918 Sinn Féin election rally in Waterford at which the speaker struggled to be heard over the Parliamentary Party bands.⁸³ Similarly, Hibernians singing Catholic hymns interrupted a demonstration during the 1913 Lockout at Liberty Hall, the Labour movement's headquarters.⁸⁴

For paramilitary organisations, music had social and financial benefits. Former rebels may have emphasised music in hindsight to contrast their own idealism with a violent British State. In his memoirs, Ernie O'Malley draws precisely this juxtaposition when he describes singing through his torture by British officers.⁸⁵ Broadly speaking, music

⁷⁹ *Independent*, 20th Nov. 1918.

⁸⁰ R. F. Foster, "'The Occupation of Living': Jack B. Yeats and the Irish Revolution in Art", in B. Rooney (ed.) *Creating History: Stories of Ireland in Art* (Dublin, 2016), pp. 261-268.

⁸¹ *Nenagh*, 31st Aug. 1918.

⁸² *Freeman's*, 28th Jan. 1918.

⁸³ T. Cleary, BMH (WS Ref. #972), p. 19.

⁸⁴ Yeats, *Lockout*, p. 295.

⁸⁵ O'Malley, *Wound*, p. 278.

was prevalent. Indeed, Sean Moylan described it not as a romanticised concept but as a drain on finances and a hindrance to military effectiveness. 'My antipathy to the bands,' he stated, 'was well known... constant band practice and parade did not make for progress and efficiency'. Moylan's determination to end the 'pre-occupation with music' was unfruitful. In 1917, he discovered during an inspection that Irish Volunteers in Roscommon had spent large quantities of their funds on new instruments.⁸⁶ Moylan's comments suggest that the emphasis on music was not just a distortion of hindsight. Contemporary press reports and individual accounts support the view that, for paramilitaries, music was a popular social activity and a means through which to express nationalist ideologies. At the Volunteers' inaugural meeting, crowds sang 'God Save Ireland' in a demonstration of the nationalist heritage to which they subscribed.⁸⁷ The Fianna Éireann also held concerts. Rosamund Jacob described one such concert which included 'Memory of the Dead' and 'Boys of Wexford'.⁸⁸ The same was true of the Irish Volunteers. Eoin MacNeill's First Battalion held a concert in Dublin in April 1916, concluding with 'A Nation Once Again'.⁸⁹ The concert 'proceeds', furthermore, were 'devoted to the equipment of the First Battalion', demonstrating that concerts were a means of fundraising.⁹⁰ Seamus Daly described selling copies of the 'Soldier's Song' at events in Dublin for the same purpose.⁹¹ Activists also sold songbooks in aid of Republican prisoner relief funds.⁹² Nationalist music's commercial appeal, therefore, benefitted Republican rebels.

⁸⁶ Moylan, BMH, pp. 51-3.

⁸⁷ *Freeman's*, 26th Nov. 1913.

⁸⁸ NLI, RJD, 14th May 1912, MS 32,582/20.

⁸⁹ NLI, Piaras Béaslaí Papers, MS 33,912 (1).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ S. Cashin, BMH (WS Ref. #8), p. 7; Daly, BMH, p. 5.

⁹² NLI, Henry Dixon Papers, MS 35,262/27.

By incorporating their musical performances into those of the Gaelic League, moreover, the Irish Volunteers cemented their co-optation of the revival movement. Before 1913, the constitutionalists made efforts to associate themselves with cultural nationalist music. MPs Michael Davitt and John Dillon both sat on the committee of the Oireachtas.⁹³ Redmond also gave speeches in aid of GAA band funds in Naas.⁹⁴ *The Hibernian Journal*, likewise, promoted ‘Irish music’, printed Gaelic songs and gave enthusiastic reviews to the music at féiseanna.⁹⁵ The Irish Volunteers, however, were visibly more forthright and successful. Their bands regularly paraded at Féiseanna. The *Kerry News* described an Irish Volunteer parade in Cahirciveen in August 1915, ‘with which were the Tralee and Dingle bands’, as ‘very imposing’, suggestive of the power, prestige, and inspiration these displays conveyed.⁹⁶

In the absence of combat before 1916, the Irish Volunteers also used bands and parades to demonstrate their military credentials. Songs of distinct and repetitive rhythm such as ‘Step Together’ helped maintain the regularity and alleviate the monotony of marches, and enhanced their image as an equivalent and alternative to the British army.⁹⁷

Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s funeral in 1915 (Fig. 2) carefully mimicked the performance practices of State funerals and the army with a band playing at the graveside.⁹⁸ Liam de Róiste described the scene: ‘Then the advance, with the sound of muffled drums and the sad music of the dead march, with slow steps and armed [sic] reversed’.⁹⁹ At the graveside, a Volunteer party fired a volley before the band played the

⁹³ *The Oireachtas: Proceedings* (Dublin, 1897), p. 3.

⁹⁴ GAAA, John Dillon (Naas) Minute Book, 8th Nov. 1887, Naas/01/01.

⁹⁵ *Hibernian*, Sept. 1906; *Hibernian*, May 1907; *Hibernian*, Aug. 1907; *Hibernian*, Aug. 1909.

⁹⁶ *News*, 16th Aug. 1915.

⁹⁷ Prendergast, BMH, pp. 23-24; *Anglo-Celt*, 25th Aug. 1917.

⁹⁸ NLI, Funeral of O’Donovan Rossa, KE234.

⁹⁹ CCCA, LDRD, 31st Jul. 1915, U271/A/18.



Figure 2 – The St James's Band plays at Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's Funeral, 1915 (NLI, KE234).

Last Post.¹⁰⁰ Reflecting on the funeral, Irish Volunteer Joseph McCarthy wrote that it ‘conveyed to everyone the significance of a real national army’.¹⁰¹ Cultivating the image of a ‘national army’ certainly seems to have been the intention. In October 1914, *Fianna Fáil*, an Irish Volunteer newspaper, contrasted the singing of Ireland’s would-be army with that of Britain: ‘it was not “A Long Way to Tipperary” they sang, no, but “Who Fears to Speak of ’98”’.¹⁰² Music therefore provided Volunteers with the gloss of a legitimate national military force, complete with their own recruiting songs.

As the public, performative nature of concerts and parades indicates, advanced nationalists used music to assert their superiority over the rest of the population. Sean

¹⁰⁰ *Freeman's*, 2nd Aug. 1915.

¹⁰¹ J. McCarthy, BMH (WS Ref. #1497), p. 34.

¹⁰² *Fianna Fáil*, 17th Oct. 1914.

Prendergast described the fostering of such a spirit in the Fianna at the home of Constance Markievicz:

So the existence of such a place as Surrey House, with its noisy callers and its equally noisy musicians and songsters, disturbed the peace and quietude of Rathmines. By the same token, songs were written and sung in honour of the same Rathmines, immortalising it as a district of Britons, shoneens and castle hacks. Surrey House was an intrusion and a challenge to the dignity and respectability and “loyalty” of Leinster Road.¹⁰³

The Fianna’s musical performances thus projected an exemplary nationalist space, intruding on an otherwise Anglicised Rathmines, solidified by derisive songs about the population. Nowhere were such assertions more apparent than ‘Easter Week’, a song about the Easter Rising to the air of ‘Memory of the Dead’, widely distributed after 1916.

Who fears to speak of Easter Week?
 Who dares its fate deplore!
 The red gold flame of Erin's name
 Confronts the world once more;
 So Irishmen, remember them,
 And raise your hearts with pride,
 For great men and straight men
 Have fought for you and died.¹⁰⁴

The updated version uses the original’s rousing chorus to praise the ‘great men and straight men’ (perhaps a step up from ‘true men’) who ‘fought for you and died’, emphasising the sacrifice of the deceased, masculine rebels. In contrast, it derides those who ‘deplore’ the ‘fate’ of 1916 in place of those who cowered at the name of ninety-

¹⁰³ S. Prendergast, BMH, p. 58.

¹⁰⁴ CO 904/37/974.

eight. The music of advanced nationalist groups therefore classified their members as exemplary amongst an otherwise unproven population.

As 'Easter Week' suggests, above and beyond those who fought were those who died.

Nationalist rebels thus used music to commemorate those martyred in the struggle.

Thomas Ashe was on hunger strike in prison when he died as a result of force-feeding

in 1917. Ashe's funeral, following in the tradition of MacManus, Parnell and

O'Donovan Rossa, was accompanied by bands that conveyed a sense of national

occasion.¹⁰⁵ Two bands played the 'Soldier's Song', while a Fianna band played the

Last Post.¹⁰⁶ Advanced nationalists published several laments commemorating Ashe.¹⁰⁷

One, attributed to Ashe himself, began 'Let me carry your cross for Ireland, Lord'. In

the context of his death, the song associated Ashe's martyrdom with Christ's. It was set

to music by Joseph Crofts and reproduced in Sinn Féin propaganda.¹⁰⁸ Kevin Barry was

hanged in 1920, aged 18, for his part in the death of three British soldiers. His execution

sparked a myriad of ballads, focussing on his age. The most widespread, simply entitled

'Kevin Barry', described him as 'Another martyr for old Ireland/Another murder for the

crown'. It also aligned the sacrifice of his 'young life' with that of the Manchester

Martyrs, depicting him 'high upon the gallows tree' before his execution, referencing

the opening of 'God Save Ireland'.¹⁰⁹ Others described him as 'but a baby yet' and of

'infant years', invoking the image of his mother to reemphasise his youth. Barry's

mother kept a scrapbook of songs and poems praising her son. As well as the public and

¹⁰⁵ *Leitrim Observer* (henceforth *Leitrim*), 6th Oct. 1917.

¹⁰⁶ *Examiner*, 1st Oct. 1917; *Freeman's*, 3rd Dec. 1917.

¹⁰⁷ CO 904/37/1027.

¹⁰⁸ CO 904/37/777 & 1065; NLI, Art Ó Briain Papers, MS 8443/5.

¹⁰⁹ NLI, Kevin Barry, EPH B450.

political, therefore, music had a private commemorative function, allowing Mary Barry to contextualise and memorialise her son's death as part of a wider cause.¹¹⁰

Music also facilitated revolutionary activity. Frank Robbins described how he and others sang while waiting in defensive positions during the Easter Rising.¹¹¹ In prison, especially, former revolutionaries described music's importance extensively. The hymn 'Faith of Our Fathers' took on new meaning for prisoners. Originally an English hymn, an Irish version was popular among nationalists in Christian Brothers' Schools and the Ancient Order of Hibernians.¹¹² In prison, the first line, 'Faith of our fathers, living still, in spite of dungeon, fire and sword' resonated with their predicament. Michael Donoghue described how, during his imprisonment in 1920, crowds outside sang songs expressing sympathy with inmates, including 'Faith of our Fathers' and the 'Soldier's Song'.¹¹³ This was a common method by which advanced nationalists expressed support for prisoners, in apparent defiance of the jail. Music breached the walls, even if inmates could not. 'We hoped' wrote Cumann na mBan's Maire Comerford describing one such performance after 1916, 'that when we put all the voice we had into "Felons of Our Land" in honour of 500 prisoners then in jail the sound would reach the gun-boat [in which they were imprisoned]'.¹¹⁴ Patrick Kelly stated that when he was imprisoned in 1916:

One Sunday in May one of our chaps began to sing through the window. The guard on duty in his cell ordered him away from

¹¹⁰ UCDA, Kevin Barry Papers, P93/29.

¹¹¹ Robbins, BMH, p. 55.

¹¹² *Examiner*, 14th May 1894; *Donegal News* (henceforth *Donegal*), 30th Nov. 1907; Coldrey, *Faith*, p. 3; *Hibernian*, Oct. 1907; 'Faith of our Fathers! Living Still!', The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology www.hymnology.co.uk/faith-of-our-fathers-living-still (2nd May 2015).

¹¹³ M. O'Donoghue, BMH (WS Ref. #1741), pp. 73-74.

¹¹⁴ UCDA, Maire Comerford Papers, LA18/9(1).

the window and to stop singing. He ignored the order. This was the signal for all prisoners to take up positions at their cell windows, and in a matter of minutes we were all shouting to each other through the small vacant space in the centre of the windows... several of them went to punishment cells but did not give up.¹¹⁵

The notion of music as defiance provides a tempting narrative. Contemporary accounts, however, are more qualified. Rather than unimpaired defiance, the statements of former prisoners in Belfast Jail given to the Dáil Éireann in 1918 described a carefully negotiated and regulated regime of music. The prison governor, it emerged, permitted prisoners to sing until 10pm each evening 'as allowed by the regulations'. Kevin O'Higgins, one of those imprisoned, described how prisoners observed a 'strict silence' thereafter, one of their own officers marking the deadline by sounding a whistle. When their singing attracted the attention of passers-by, the prison governor requested that they moderate their singing or stop, a request that they carried out without complaint.¹¹⁶

Instead, as with their Fenian predecessors, prisoners more often used music as a means of entertainment and commemoration. Writing to his son from Mountjoy Jail in 1920, William Gogan stated that his singing 'cheered some of our... boys'.¹¹⁷ In his Belfast Prison diary, future IRA officer Eoin O'Duffy described a series of 'most amusing' concerts.¹¹⁸ When Michael Hayes was imprisoned in Ballykinlar in 1920, he received a letter suggesting that a 'camp band' could help to alleviate boredom.¹¹⁹ Such methods were taken up enthusiastically, particularly in internment camps where prisoners

¹¹⁵ P. Kelly, BMH, pp. 30-31.

¹¹⁶ NAI, 'Belfast Prison: ill-treatment of Republican prisoners', Dáil Éireann Papers/2/519.

¹¹⁷ NLI, William J. Gogan Collection, MS 49,671.

¹¹⁸ NLI, Eoin O'Duffy Papers, MS 48,280/1.

¹¹⁹ UCDA, Michael Hayes Papers, P53/95.

enjoyed greater freedoms.¹²⁰ In Frongoch, prisoners formed an ‘entertainments sub-committee’, responsible for organising two concerts per week. The army required that prisoners inform the commanding officer two days beforehand, further evidence that this was a permitted means of entertainment, rather than resistance.¹²¹ Jimmy Mulkerns’ performances as the ‘Rajah of Frongoch’ were particularly well received.¹²² The Ballykinlar band performed several concerts including nationalist songs such as ‘The West’s Awake’.¹²³ The camp newspaper, *The Barbed Wire*, stated that the Rajah deserved the ‘main credit’ for the ‘successful performances’, demonstrating that they were perceived to be a means of raising morale.¹²⁴ There were few activities, it stated, ‘in which the hearty thanks of the men have been better won’.¹²⁵ Camp newspapers also attempted to raise morale by printing songs. One of those, ‘The Day That We Get Out’, made the intended message clear in its title.¹²⁶ Peadar Kearney also occupied his time by learning to play the violin (Fig. 3) and writing songs.¹²⁷ He wrote ‘Arise’ from Ballykinlar, while Constance Markievicz described in letters from prison her efforts at writing what she labelled ‘doggerel’.¹²⁸ As this suggests, music in prison was another of the ‘shared revolutionary experiences’ in which both men and women participated.¹²⁹ Women outside prison too, raised funds through concerts for prisoners’ dependents.¹³⁰ For some, songs also facilitated memorialisation of experience. Multiple prisoners collected signatures from fellow prisoners in autograph books, often accompanied by

¹²⁰ McConville, *Prisoners*, p. 457.

¹²¹ NLI, POS1638.

¹²² Interview, Val Mulkerns.

¹²³ M. Ó Riada, *Cuirm Ceoil Agus Dramaí* (Ballykinlar Internment Camp, 1921); Kearney, *Eva*, p. 30.

¹²⁴ KG, *The Barbed Wire* Vol. 1 (1), 18NW1D2328.

¹²⁵ KG, *Barbed*.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Kearney, *Eva*, pp. 14, 40.

¹²⁸ Kearney, *Eva*, p. 8; C. Markievicz, *Prison Letters of Countess Markievicz* (London, 1934), p. 202.

¹²⁹ Pašeta, *Women*, p. 194.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 207.



Figure 3 – The Ballykinlar No. 1 Camp Violin Class. Peadar Kearney can be seen in the second row from the back, third from the right. Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum (19PO-1A32-28).

song quotes characterising their experiences. Gerald Crofts kept a book in Mountjoy and Kilmainham, in which one signatory wrote:

And surely here in England's jail,
 So sing the songs of Innisfail,
 God sent a blessing rare to us,
 A blue eyed fair head Orpheus,
 To cheer our sorrows, God's own herald,
 Eternal blessing on you, Gerald.¹³¹

Such memorialisation (and the prevalence of communal, morale-raising music) illustrates music's part in fostering relationships during imprisonment. Music, therefore,

¹³¹ NLI, Signed Book from Prison Owned by Gerald Crofts, MS 42,124; NLI, Autograph Book from Reading Gaol and Frongoch Internment Camp for Reading Prisoners with Illustrations, 1916-1917, MS 46,586.

was predominantly a means of entertainment, commemoration and comradeship with limited opportunities for idealistic resistance. Even then, the impact on morale should not be exaggerated. Kearney's letters to his wife convey his unhappiness with food standards and with being separated from his children.¹³² Describing an upcoming concert, he wrote that he was looking for a way to 'avoid it'. After hearing news of his wife's illness he had 'anything but interest in concerts'.¹³³ Kearney's remarks serve as a reminder that despite its positive reception, music could never fully distract from, let alone undo, the circumstances of imprisonment.

Music's function as entertainment and commemoration is similarly evidenced in the mock-heroic, self-parodying songs popular among the IRA. John O'Brien described a parody of the 'Shan Van Vocht' composed by his IRA unit commemorating one of their members throwing a dud grenade.¹³⁴ Conversely, mock-heroic songs could deride the Volunteers. O'Brien also described women in Limerick 'who kept company with British soldiers' singing 'Soldiers are we, who nearly fought for Ireland', mocking local Volunteers who had not taken part in the Rising.¹³⁵ Predominantly, however, rebels used comic songs to reflect humorously on their expectations and experiences. 'The Old Fenian Gun' describes a boy who sees his father's 'Fenian gun' hanging on the wall and, attempting to emulate him, finds himself imprisoned. The dark humour of the song's conclusion, especially given the numbers who met the fate described, appealed, and Sinn Féin regularly reproduced it in its literature.¹³⁶

¹³² Kearney, *Eva*, p. 75.

¹³³ *Ibid.* p. 30.

¹³⁴ J. O'Brien, BMH (WS Ref. #1647), p. 21.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 6.

¹³⁶ CO 904/37/783; CO 904/161/778; *The Fenian Songbook* (Dublin, 1916), p. 14.

In contrast to studies such as Zimmermann's or Whitfield's that assume with minimal evidence that music inspired the revolutionary generation, this section has engaged with the contexts, narratives and documents of revolutionaries, illustrating music's impact on the movement in more detail. The functions of music that had been commonplace since 1848 – mourning martyrs, providing a revolutionary character to non-violent activities, claiming space, expressing 'authentic' Irish culture – were widely employed by revolutionaries. The songs of Sinn Féin and the IRA, and the public demonstrations thereof, associated their cause with nationalist history, gave the appearance of a legitimate national force and co-opted the revival movement into a radical agenda. It introduced young people to nationalist ideals and provided them with activities and issues through which to engage and develop their views and relationships. It also allowed activists and supporters to claim space from and intimidate their opponents. As politics became increasingly militant, especially after 1916, advanced nationalists appropriated State commemorative rituals. In guerrilla war, they used songs and musical performance for reflection and entertainment, particularly in prison.

II

‘Oh, how we worship our Dora’: Seditious Singing and British Laws

In the House of Commons on 5 November 1918, Edward Shortt, Chief Secretary for Ireland, responded to a question regarding an Irishman prosecuted for singing 'an old Irish patriotic song'. Shortt expressed that he had 'great difficulty in believing such a conviction was ever obtained' and that he should 'like to see what else the individual was doing besides singing'. 'If a burglar happened to be whistling "Rule Britannia" when caught in the act,' he asked, 'could it be said he was convicted of whistling a patriotic tune?'.¹³⁷ Unsurprisingly, his scepticism was not shared by nationalists, but his question is a valid one. Music's relationship with the law has been oversimplified in existing studies, the result of a narrow source base and an uncritical acceptance of nationalist narratives.¹³⁸ This chapter problematises those narratives where appropriate and complicates assumptions about the law's impact on music. Police and government took various steps to suppress dissent, including the advanced nationalist movement, after 1914. The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) (1914) granted additional powers to government, including censorship and trial by courts martial, especially when the authorities believed there was German involvement and/or a threat to recruitment.¹³⁹ The Restoration of Order in Ireland Act (1920) continued and extended these powers in Ireland during the Anglo-Irish War.

¹³⁷ *Hansard*, HC 5th Nov. 1918, Vol. 110, Col. 1988.

¹³⁸ Zimmermann, *Songs*, p. 51; G. Ó Daghail, 'Ballads and the Law', *Ulster Folklife* 19 (1973), pp. 38-40; M. Cronin, "'By Memory Inspired": The Past in popular Song, 1798-1900' in T. Dooley (ed.), *Ireland's Polemical Past: Views of History in Honour of R. V. Comerford* (Dublin, 2010), p. 38; Coldrey, *Faith*, p. 268; Moylan, *Indignant*, p. xv; S. Millar, 'Let the People Sing? Irish Rebel Songs, Sectarianism, and Scotland's Offensive Behaviour Act', *Popular Music*, 35 (3) (2016), p. 301.

¹³⁹ B. Novick, 'DORA, Suppression and Nationalist Propaganda in Ireland, 1914-1915', *New Hibernia Review* 1 (4) (Winter, 1997), pp. 42-44; B. Novick, 'Postal Censorship, 1914-16', *Irish Historical Studies* 31 (123) (May 1999), pp. 343-356.

As noted in Chapter One, prosecutions on the basis of seditious music were unusual before 1913. While DORA created prominent legal cases involving music, convictions remained low. Magistrates dismissed a rare case that came to trial in 1916, for the singing of 'Easter Week' and 'God Save Ireland'.¹⁴⁰ In Cavan in July 1918, Patrick Masterson was bound to the peace for singing the 'Soldier's Song' and other nationalist songs, in conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace.¹⁴¹ This was part of a spike in convictions in 1918 that saw nine individuals imprisoned for seditious singing.¹⁴² While that number is comparatively an increase, it is hardly representative of the numbers who sang seditious songs, even in earshot of police. Bureau of Military History statements, Military Service Pension records, memoirs and newspapers indicate why particular individuals were singled out. Jack O'Sheehan was sentenced to two years of hard labour under DORA after he sang the 'Soldier's Song' and 'Felons of Our Land' at a concert in 1918.¹⁴³ His established reputation as a performer ensured that his conviction was widely reported. O'Sheehan's involvement in advanced nationalism was substantial. He participated in the Rising, organised Sinn Féin fundraising concerts and, according to his Republican colleague Patrick Moylett, was aware that if he 'appeared in public outside the Hall he would be arrested'.¹⁴⁴ During the Civil War, O'Sheehan opposed the Treaty and was interned by the new government.¹⁴⁵ Police documents only record the surnames and first initials of the others convicted for seditious singing, but their names and the locations of their arrests match those of identifiable Republicans. John Reilly,

¹⁴⁰ *Freeman's*, 17th Oct. 1916.

¹⁴¹ *Anglo-Celt*, 27th Jul. 1918.

¹⁴² CO 904/167/150, 280 & 410.

¹⁴³ *Kilkenny People* (henceforth *Kilkenny*), 14th Sept. 1918.

¹⁴⁴ *Independent*, 5th May 1967; P. Moylett, BMH (WS Ref. #767), p. 11.

¹⁴⁵ *Tuam Herald* (henceforth *Tuam*), 3rd Oct. 1964.

Thomas Ryan and George Caniffe were all paramilitary Republicans in Galway, where three men of the same initials and surnames were convicted for seditious singing.¹⁴⁶ In Wexford, where J. McCarthy, N. O'Leary, P. Byrne, J. Radford and P. Parle were sentenced, Joseph McCarthy was an Irish Volunteer commander; his Bureau of Military History statement stops in 1916, two years before the arrest, but he remained active until 1921.¹⁴⁷ Peter Byrne, Patrick Parle and Ned O'Leary are also named in the records of the Wexford Irish Volunteers.¹⁴⁸ There is no record of a 'J. Radford'. It is possible that he was involved but not named in any statements, was misidentified, in the wrong place at the wrong time, or gave a false name upon arrest, not uncommon among volunteers.¹⁴⁹ Even without firm conclusions on Radford, the correlation between arrest and revolutionary affiliation suggests that police considered other factors beyond singing. Seditious singing, it appears, was a pretext on which police arrested a minority of politically troublesome individuals when the opportunity arose.

Police also interfered with concerts and féiseanna. As with the aforementioned arrests, this aimed to disrupt paramilitary and separatist activity, rather than suppress Irish culture. The police prohibited a concert in Tranmare in July 1918 because they suspected that it was covering fundraising and drilling for the Irish Volunteers.¹⁵⁰ Frank Robbins, too, described how police prevented patrons from reaching a concert in 1919 intended as a Citizen Army fundraiser.¹⁵¹ In November 1919, John and Patrick

¹⁴⁶ T. Hussey, BMH (WS Ref. #1260), p. 9; M. Cleary, BMH (WS Ref. #1246), p. 6; J. Togher, BMH (WS Ref. #1729), p. 10; CO 904/167/410.

¹⁴⁷ CO 904/167/150; McCarthy, BMH.

¹⁴⁸ A. Bailey, BMH (WS Ref. #1430), p. 9; Military Service Pensions Collection (henceforth MSPC), South Wexford Brigade, RO/547; MSPC, South Wexford Brigade, RO/549.

¹⁴⁹ T. Malone, BMH (WS Ref. #845), p. 70.

¹⁵⁰ CO 904/167/81.

¹⁵¹ Robbins, BMH, p. 158.

Kilcommins, Patrick O'Neill and Patrick Curley were tried for planning a concert in a Sinn Féin hall that a court had ordered be closed the previous April; that they continued to use it after the order was the primary reason for the conviction. Nevertheless, police also accused them of using the hall for 'causing disaffection and sedition', including songs in 'the Irish language' and the 'Soldier's Song'.¹⁵² While this was certainly an example of the authorities suppressing nationalist culture, the number of openly advertised concerts and féiseanna that continued uninhibited suggests that there was nothing approaching a blanket ban.¹⁵³ The most severe punishment connected to such concerts was six months hard labour, handed to Michael Carolan.¹⁵⁴ Like those convicted of seditious singing, however, Carolan's political connections may have worked against him; Bernard Nolan described him as 'very prominent in the Irish Republican Army'.¹⁵⁵

Police targeted Sinn Féin's printed propaganda more directly by seizing songbooks and ballad sheets; they carried out several such seizures in 1917 and 1918.¹⁵⁶ Their intention was to restrict the dissemination of nationalist songs by focussing on supply, rather than individual ownership.¹⁵⁷ When police searched Maeve Cavanagh's home in 1917, they found only a small quantity of material and made no seizures; they even praised the 'engaging qualities' of her writings.¹⁵⁸ When they returned days later and recovered published versions of her anthology *Songs of Freedom, Easter 1916*, however, they

¹⁵² *Tribune*, 22nd Nov. 1919.

¹⁵³ *Tribune*, 15th Aug. 1919; *Tribune*, 24th Jul. 1920; *Tribune*, 17th Apr. 1920; *Limerick Leader* (henceforth *Limerick*), 17th May 1918.

¹⁵⁴ *Leitrim*, 14th Feb. 1920.

¹⁵⁵ B. Nolan, BMH (WS Ref. #844), p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ CO 904/161/745-1104.

¹⁵⁷ M. Noyk, BMH (WS Ref. #707), p. 20.

¹⁵⁸ CO 904/161/777.

confiscated them. Cavanagh was present throughout the searches, and appears to have mocked her investigators by saying that she had no seditious literature because she had already sold it all. She also told them that she wrote the ‘Soldier’s Song’.¹⁵⁹ Referring to songs ‘of a seditious nature’ confiscated from a property in Dublin, police noted ‘most of this stuff is legitimate enough and in general circulation’. The cause for seizing it was the owner’s tendency to force it upon other retailers.¹⁶⁰ Thus, police moved to stop the spread of such material by targeting distribution. Even so, the raids were short-lived. In August 1918, Police Inspector George Love raided a shop on Mary Street, Dublin. Attempting to reduce pressure on their propaganda efforts, Sinn Féin legal adviser Michael Noyk and the owner attempted to sue Love for £1000.¹⁶¹ The court dismissed the case as frivolous, but critical press commentary was enough to deter further seizures.¹⁶²

While the government attempted (albeit ineffectively) to censor nationalist songs, they were less able to stop reports of censorship itself. Consequently, the perception of suppression in the public consciousness was more powerful than any qualified reality. The effect of arresting individuals for seditious singing, whether a pretext or otherwise, along with interfering with concerts and actively censoring printed music, conformed to preconceived ideas of British tyranny. Jack O’Sheehan’s arrest was the primary example on which such commentary drew. His arrest and trial were covered in at least twelve newspapers, largely critically.¹⁶³ The *Nenagh Guardian* said that the two-year

¹⁵⁹ CO 904/161/782.

¹⁶⁰ CO 904/161/1104-1106.

¹⁶¹ Noyk, BMH, p. 20.

¹⁶² *Independent*, 7th Sept. 1918; *Independent*, 26th Sept. 1918; CO 904/37/473-475; Box 37 contains details of the case and examples of the material seized.

¹⁶³ *Freeman’s*, 28th Aug. 1918; *Telegraph*, 31st Aug. 1918; *Anglo-Celt*, 31st Aug. 1918; *Nenagh*, 31st Aug. 1918; *Independent*, 5th Sept. 1918; *Evening*, 6th Sept. 1918; *Killarney Echo*, 7th Sept. 1918; *Leitrim*, 7th

sentence, usually reserved for ‘heinous crimes’, was ‘extreme’, and suggested that the ‘real cause’ for his arrest was that he was ‘a useful man at elections’.¹⁶⁴ The *Meath Chronicle* called the arrest ‘atrocious’.¹⁶⁵ ‘We hope’, the newspaper stated, ‘that recruiting... will be duly stimulated by this latest demonstration of the blessings of freedom under a benign British rule’.¹⁶⁶ O’Sheehan represented himself at trial, and newspapers praised his ‘eloquent’ defence. O’Sheehan questioned the validity of DORA (a ‘bad law’) and the military court, insisting that he should be tried by a jury of his countrymen. The police held, he argued, that the district was already disaffected before his performance, and therefore his singing could not itself have caused disaffection. He also noted – correctly – that army recruitment propaganda quoted similarly seditious songs (discussed in Section I).¹⁶⁷ The press subsequently covered the experiences of his wife, Molly, whom police arrested but released a week later without charge. Her husband’s arrest and the breakup of his concert company put her under financial strain. She wrote a letter detailing her difficulties, printed in the *Connacht Tribune*, which also promoted a benefit concert held by his former colleagues.¹⁶⁸ The *Meath Chronicle* attributed her arrest to a ‘system of petty persecution’ and encouraged readers to contribute to her relief fund.¹⁶⁹ This perception of O’Sheehan’s treatment endured. Two years later, a correspondent to the *Freeman’s Journal* claimed that the authorities were ‘imprisoning young men and women... for the crime of singing the pretty songs of our country’.¹⁷⁰ In a memoir written in 1956, Maire Comerford stated that men were

Sept. 1918; *Kilkenny*, 14th Sept. 1918; *Meath Chronicle* (henceforth *Meath*), 14th Sept. 1918; *Butte Independent*, 5th Oct. 1918; *Connacht Tribune* (henceforth *Connacht*), 5th Oct. 1918.

¹⁶⁴ *Nenagh*, 21st Sept. 1918.

¹⁶⁵ *Meath*, 19th Oct. 1918.

¹⁶⁶ *Meath*, 28th Sept. 1918.

¹⁶⁷ *Freeman’s*, 28th Aug. 1918; *Meath*, 14th Sept. 1918.

¹⁶⁸ *Connacht*, 31st Aug. 1918; *Connacht*, 19th Oct. 1918.

¹⁶⁹ *Meath*, 19th Oct. 1918.

¹⁷⁰ *Freeman’s*, 7th Jan. 1920.

‘courtmartialled [sic] for singing the Soldier’s Song or Felons of our Land [the songs O’Sheehan was accused of singing]’.¹⁷¹ Historians, too, often cite O’Sheehan’s arrest without qualification.¹⁷² Peadar Kearney satirised DORA itself in song:

It’s Dora, Dora,
Oh, how we worship our Dora,
She came here to teach our young men how to live,
How to forget, aye, and how to forgive.
And should we Dora ever displease or annoy,
She’ll treat us quite well in a first class hotel,
With the beautiful name of Mountjoy.¹⁷³

Kearney portrays DORA as a female seductress sent from Britain as a supposed kindness. If the Irish transgressed on her teachings, she would put them in the ‘hotel’ of Mountjoy Jail. Ironically portraying prisons as hotels was common (other songs include ‘Knutsford Hotel’ and ‘Mountjoy Hotel’).¹⁷⁴ Republicans thus mocked and disarmed the severity of British oppression. Kearney’s song captures the way in which creative use of legislation and single-minded policing soured Irish opinion. The narrative of oppression that arrests and raids encouraged played into that view.

Examining the law’s impact on nationalist musical culture supports the view expressed by Ben Novick that suppression was used so sparingly and incompetently as to be ‘ineffective and unproductive’.¹⁷⁵ Contrary to the claims of existing scholarship, the government did not pursue a widespread campaign of censorship against nationalist songs. Instead, on a limited basis and for a limited time, police used songs as a pretext on which to arrest troublesome activists, and sought to undermine advanced nationalist

¹⁷¹ UCDA, Maire Comerford Papers, LA18/13(1).

¹⁷² Coldrey, *Faith*, p. 268; Moylan, *Indignant*, p. xv.

¹⁷³ CO 904/37/759.

¹⁷⁴ CO 904/37/784; KG, ‘Songs and Photographs from 1916’, 17MUIC1411; *Tribune*, 22nd Nov. 1919.

¹⁷⁵ Novick, ‘Suppression’, p. 57.

propaganda and fundraising. Their actions were ultimately more damaging to public relations than they were beneficial in tackling radical nationalism. Suppression of music during the Irish revolution was ‘too weak to root out opposition, but provocative enough to nurture it’.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ C. Townshend quoted in M. Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 269.

III

‘We thought we fought for Ireland’: Music and the Civil War

On 8 December 1921, two days after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Alice Ginnell attended a dinner at which a performer sang a ‘rebel song’. Reflecting on her disappointment with the Treaty, Ginnell remarked: ‘we can give up singing these songs now’. Another guest responded that if that was how Ireland felt about the Treaty ‘it won’t be much of a success’.¹⁷⁷ The Treaty partitioned Ireland into Northern Ireland, which remained in the UK, and an autonomous Free State in the South, falling short of the independent Republic for which many hoped. Both Sinn Féin and the IRA split as a result. Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, who led the Treaty negotiations, were the foremost figures supporting the Treaty, while Éamon de Valera was its highest profile opponent. Where the Treaty stipulated that the Free State was part of the British Empire, de Valera, in his ‘Document No. 2’, proposed a looser ‘external association’. Elections were held under a nominal nationalist alliance in June 1922, but later that month Free State forces attacked the Four Courts building in Dublin, which had been occupied by the anti-Treaty IRA. Civil War followed. The new Irish government interned and executed dissidents. Anti-Treaty supporters responded by raising funds for prisoners and fighting back. Griffith died in August 1922, and Collins was assassinated less than two weeks later. In April 1923, the anti-Treaty IRA voted to negotiate peace, with de Valera leading the talks. They reached no agreement, and the War ended with anti-Treaty forces refusing to enter the Dáil. Far giving up rebel songs, both sides made their claim to nationalist musical culture.

¹⁷⁷ A. Ginnell, BMH (WS Ref. #982), p. 47.

There were some limited celebrations in July 1921 of the ceasefire that preceded the Treaty. Bands and crowds gathered in Dublin and sang ‘Republican songs’.¹⁷⁸ Substantial musical celebrations, however, were rare, partly due to an agreement between the IRA and the British government prohibiting provocative displays of force, whether armed or unarmed. Thus, the paramilitary parades that characterised the years before the war were not permitted.¹⁷⁹ The IRA appears to have taken the commitment seriously. Bands planned a parade in Limerick in July, but cancelled it after ‘notice’ from the local IRA regiment.¹⁸⁰ Celebrations were also limited following the Treaty. IRA bands added a sense of ceremony to the handing over of barracks from the police and British army to Irish troops, as in the case of the Gowran Police Barracks in February 1922, but there were few public displays honouring the Treaty itself.¹⁸¹ A torchlight parade by a Hibernian Band in Navan was an isolated example.¹⁸² Given the ambivalence with which many greeted the Treaty, the absence of widespread celebration is unsurprising and indicative of what was for many an underwhelming outcome.

There were more substantial celebrations for the release of prisoners, of which music formed a part. Five internees returning to Arva in December 1921 were greeted by a band playing ‘national airs’, before a ball in their honour that evening.¹⁸³ Supporters also organised fundraising concerts for former prisoners and the dependents of deceased rebels, for instance a fundraising concert in Thomastown for an ‘ex-political prisoners

¹⁷⁸ *Independent*, 12th Jul. 1921.

¹⁷⁹ *Fermanagh Herald* (henceforth *Fermanagh*), 22nd Oct. 1921.

¹⁸⁰ *Independent*, 12th Jul. 1921.

¹⁸¹ *Kilkenny*, 18th Feb. 1922.

¹⁸² *Anglo-Celt*, 7th Dec. 1921.

¹⁸³ *Anglo-Celt*, 17th Dec. 1921.

association'. The performance content was political, including the 'Soldier's Song'.¹⁸⁴

While the Treaty was not widely celebrated, therefore, advanced nationalists did use celebratory musical performances to honour participants in the Anglo-Irish War.

In some instances music did provide a unifying symbol for the divided Republican movement. At the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis (Conference) in February 1922, while leaders of the two factions sat in discussions, 'the assembly sought a means of whiling [the time] away. A song was called for, and there was a quick response in "A Soldier's Song", the vast crowd taking up the chorus'.¹⁸⁵ At the same Ard Fheis, delegates sportingly agreed that Sinn Féin bands would attend the rallies of both the pro- and anti-Treaty factions. The agreement seems to have been honoured. The Waterford Sinn Féin Brass Band attended meetings of both factions.¹⁸⁶ Even bands not affiliated with Sinn Féin, disinclined to turn away double payment, appeared for both: the Lee Pipers' Band in Cork played at separate meetings addressed by Collins and de Valera in the space of four days.¹⁸⁷ Given the electoral pact in 1922, pro- and anti-Treaty figures also appeared at rallies together. Two pipers' bands and a fife and drum band performed at a joint rally in Cork in June 1922.¹⁸⁸ Bands enhanced the symbolic unity, providing the appearance of a State occasion, reminiscent of rallies in 1918.

The romantic, ideological nature of songs might suggest that songwriters would be inclined to oppose the compromise Treaty, but no tendency to sympathise with one side is apparent. Of those about whom evidence is available, most ceased political

¹⁸⁴ *Kilkenny*, 25th Mar. 1922.

¹⁸⁵ *Ulster Herald* (henceforth *Ulster*), 25th Feb. 1922.

¹⁸⁶ *Munster*, 25th Mar. 1922.

¹⁸⁷ *Examiner*, 12th Jun. 1922; *Freeman's*, 15th Jun. 1922.

¹⁸⁸ *Freeman's*, 12th Jun. 1922.

involvement altogether. Maeve Cavanagh does not appear to have been active in nationalist politics after 1916, although she continued to write songs for trade unionists.¹⁸⁹ Joseph Crofts performed at concerts, but there is no evidence of political activity.¹⁹⁰ Jimmy Mulkerens embarked on a brief tour with the Ballykinlar Camp band; he had no explicit political involvement, but believed that Collins had ‘done the best he could’ in the negotiations.¹⁹¹ Peadar Kearney also largely ceased political involvement, but supported the Treaty. He told Séamus de Búrca:

It is easy for men suddenly converted to an ideal getting impatient because things are not moving fast enough, forgetting that men like Michael Collins were almost born and bred Republicans, living, waking and sleeping, and striking perhaps for years against odds, discouragement and prejudice.¹⁹²

Kearney’s pragmatism is typical of those who supported the Treaty, as is his personal loyalty to Collins.¹⁹³ For Kearney, the Treaty was a stepping stone in the right direction. He did eventually express support for dissident Republicans in 1933, and penned an additional verse for the ‘Soldier’s Song’ condemning partition.¹⁹⁴ This was not a contradiction, nor had Kearney, as one dissident Republican explained it, ‘reverted to his Republican allegiance’.¹⁹⁵ Rather, it demonstrates that supporting the Treaty did not mean opposing Republicanism, only pursuing it in what appeared to be more attainable increments. Like Kearney, J. J. Walsh accepted the Treaty because, in his words, he ‘saw no hope of doing better’. Walsh, however, was more politically active, serving as

¹⁸⁹ M. Cavanagh-McDowell, BMH, p. 15; M. Cavanagh-McDowell, *Irish Songs of the Months* (Dublin, 1932).

¹⁹⁰ *Sunday Independent* (henceforth *Sunday*), 19th Nov. 1923.

¹⁹¹ *Freeman’s*, 5th Feb. 1922; Interview, Val Mulkerens.

¹⁹² Búrca, *Soldier’s*, p. 220.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 218.

¹⁹⁴ Búrca, *Soldier’s*, p. 246; McGarry, *Abbey*, p. 227.

¹⁹⁵ MacEoin, *Survivors*, p. 99.

Postmaster General in the new government.¹⁹⁶ Brian O’Higgins, too, continued to be involved in politics, but in opposition to the Treaty. O’Higgins was an anti-treaty Teachta Dála (Member of the Dáil – TD) in Clare and at rallies described the Treaty as a ruse for a fresh British invasion.¹⁹⁷ He was imprisoned after the outbreak of hostilities, and embarked on a 28-day hunger strike that left him in a ‘critical condition’.¹⁹⁸

Terry Moylan argues that there were ‘no songs or poems produced by the pro-Treaty side, unless one counts the laments for the death of Michael Collins’.¹⁹⁹ This is misleading, not least because there are few grounds on which to omit laments for Collins. Although compositions opposing the Treaty were more numerous than those supporting it, both sides produced songs justifying their stance and denigrating that of their opponents. After the 1922 election a Free State pamphlet included a song entitled ‘Liberty’ that celebrated the Treaty’s achievement:

Let us drink our first draft of the long pent-up tide,
 By tyrants domestic and foreign denied,
 Gigantic stride freedom has made in our land;
 Refuted are the slanderers are would us brand
 As a quarrelsome, dishonest, half-savage race,
 Unfit with the nations to hold honest place.²⁰⁰

By describing Ireland claiming her place among ‘the nations’, the song alludes to ‘A Nation Once Again’, while its invitation to ‘drink our first draft’ invokes the ‘true man’ permitted to ‘raise your glass’ in ‘Memory of the Dead’. The prophecies of Young Ireland, the song implies, are fulfilled in the Treaty. Songs criticising the Treaty’s

¹⁹⁶ Walsh, *Recollections*, pp. 56, 61.

¹⁹⁷ *Meath*, 7th Jan. 1922; *Freeman’s*, 29th May 1922; *Skibbereen*, 4th Mar. 1922.

¹⁹⁸ *Freeman’s*, 16th Nov. 1923; *Examiner*, 16th Nov. 1923.

¹⁹⁹ Moylan, *Indignant*, p. xvii.

²⁰⁰ UCDA, Ernie O’Malley Papers, P17a/257.

opponents were often laments. In 1939 the Folklore Commission interviewed John O'Donoghue, in County Kerry; he recounted a lament that he composed during the Civil War: 'At the Graveyard'. It described two Free State soldiers killed by Republicans, expressing incomprehension at 'Irishmen killing one brother Irishman':

But now we're butchers of our own. My God! And they can smile
As if they were doing noble work for Erin's lovely isle;
At their foul hands fell John and Tom, the patriots of Scarteen:
When on our shore they sleep beside the rolling sheen.²⁰¹

The long vowel sounds end-weighting each line convey the mournful tone, while the description of Republicans as 'butchers' with doubtful claims to be 'doing noble work for Erin's lovely isle' provides a scathing criticism. Unlike songs condemning Britain, however, there is a desperation ('My God!') to O'Donoghue's lyrics. The Civil War inspired a hopelessness about Ireland's condition. Songs mourning the death of Collins have similar features, such as 'Lament for Michael Collins':

The might of the Saxon had failed to destroy him,
The price on his head could not tempt his brave men
But his own country boys – ah! It pains me to say it –
Shot down our pride in that lone fatal glen.
Bravely he faced them, all shelter refusing
With his few faithful soldiers he fought side by side
On the bullet-swept roadway, his comrades enthusing
He strove like a hero – a hero he died.²⁰²

Collins' 'own country boys' attack him, succeeding where the 'Saxon' failed. Collins has not relinquished his Republican ideology, but remains 'a hero', 'shot down' by anti-Treaty forces, hence the song's mournful subject, but it is as much a lament of the

²⁰¹ IFC 608:359-369.

²⁰² University College Dublin Library, Colm Ó Lochlainn Collection: Ballads W1K3/44.

circumstance of Civil War. The composition of new songs allowed those who accepted the Treaty to criticise their opponents, lament the war itself, and assert that their strategy legitimately represented the nationalist heritage.

The Treaty's opponents used music in a similar manner, although they were prepared to attack their opponents more aggressively, for instance in two alternative versions of 'God Save Ireland'. The first, 'God Save Ireland from the Staters', condemns the Free State leaders, specifically military commander Richard Mulcahy, as 'helped by Churchill's Empire view', referring to Winston Churchill's role in negotiating the Treaty and arming the Free State army.²⁰³ In place of 'they met him face to face with the courage of their race/And they went with souls undaunted to their doom', the new version declared 'By the sufferings of our dead and the blood our martyr's shed/We'll yet defeat Churchill's Green and Tans'. The parodic description of Free State troops as 'Green and Tans' cements associations between the Free State and British imperialists, comparing them to the 'Black and Tans'.²⁰⁴ Similarly, 'God Save (the Southern Part of) Ireland', satirises the Treaty, particularly partition:

High on the sour apple tree
We will hang the memory
Of the A.O.H., the I.R.A. And B.
Hide away the Orange and Green
Where they can no more be seen,
For beneath the Union Jack we all are free

God Save the Southern part of Ireland,
Three-quarters of a nation once again,
We will to the Treaty stick,
For 'tis good enough for-George
And the father and the mother of Sinn Féin²⁰⁵

²⁰³ B. Kline, 'Churchill and Collins 1919-22: Admirers or Adversaries?', *History Ireland*, 1 (3) (Autumn, 1993), p. 40.

²⁰⁴ NLI, Sheehy-Skeffington Collection, MS 33,627 (11).

²⁰⁵ NLI, 'God Save (The Southern Part of) Ireland', *Broadside Ballads* Vol. 6 – G-H, 12B 776.

The title alone implies betrayal; placing ‘the southern part of’ in parenthesis portrays partition as an unexpected proviso. The lyrics allude to various songs, notably ‘three-quarters of a nation once again’ referring to ‘A Nation Once Again’ and the false fruition thereof.²⁰⁶ That these lyrics come in place of “‘God Save Ireland’ said they all’ provides an ironic contrast between the original’s implied unity and the stark disunity of partition. The total surrender to the Treaty and the ‘Union Jack’ undermines the Free State’s integrity. It is unclear to whom ‘the father and the mother of Sinn Féin’ refers. The most likely father would be Arthur Griffith, who founded the party, negotiated the Treaty, and became President of the Dáil. The mother may be Collins, or perhaps Mulcahy, in an attempt to emasculate his militant persona. These mock-heroic devices combine with an uplifting air to criticise the Treaty and the Free State.

Most prominent were the attempts of the respective factions to claim legitimate use of the existing nationalist repertoire. In this sense the rivalry between pro- and anti-Treaty was comparable to that between the Parliamentary Party and Sinn Féin before 1918. Contrary to the accusations of ‘God Save (the Southern Part of) Ireland’, supporters of the Free State suggested that the Treaty fulfilled the prophecy of ‘A Nation Once Again’. A letter to the traditionally moderate *Freeman’s Journal* in January 1922 stated ‘now that Ireland is “a nation once again”... everything is to be gained by unity and nothing lost’.²⁰⁷ Appropriating the IRA’s image as a ‘national army’ (itself based on British army rituals), the Free State Army established bands and printed marching songs in its newspaper (e.g. ‘Step Together’).²⁰⁸ Pro-Treaty public meetings used existing

²⁰⁶ The song also alludes to ‘John Brown’s Body’, ‘The Soldier’s Song’, and ‘Rule Britannia’.

²⁰⁷ *Freeman’s*, 3rd Jan. 1922.

²⁰⁸ UCDA, Desmond Fitzgerald Photographs, P80/PH/83; *An T’Oglac*, 24th Feb. 1923.

Republican songs. For instance, rallies in Mullingar and Galway in March 1922 concluded with communal renditions of the ‘Soldier’s Song’, thus claiming the song’s IRA lineage.²⁰⁹ Comparable claims by Republicans were refuted. As one Treaty supporter wrote in the *Meath Chronicle*:

Let the Irish Black and Tans, who shouted down Michael Collins and Sean Mckeon, drop the “Soldier’s Song” and give us something more in consonance with their imitation tactics. A Soldier’s Song should not be deified by armed hooligans whether pro- or anti-Treaty. Howling at those who risked all for their country so much like the snarling of ill-bred mongrels at those who rescued them from danger, but it begets more contempt than anger: “Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to document No. 2” would be more in harmony with the extravagant ravings of these external associationists.²¹⁰

The behaviour of the Treaty’s opponents in this conception rendered them unworthy of the ‘Soldier’s Song’ and dehumanised them (‘mongrels’), instead aligning them with the Black and Tans. In referencing ‘Document No. 2’, the writer conveyed what he perceived to be the absurd Republican pretensions of the anti-Treaty case. His polemical analysis, combined with the satirical suggestion of more appropriate lyrics, externalised Republicans from nationalist musical traditions.

The Treaty’s opponents attempted to establish exclusivity over existing nationalist music and musical performance in the same manner. The ‘Soldier’s Song’ was central to these efforts. When de Valera, Cathal Brugha and Constance Markievicz (all anti-Treaty) arrived at a Cork rally in February 1922, a band led a procession to the town hall. Anti-Treaty IRA members marched in formation and saluted de Valera while the

²⁰⁹ *Freeman’s*, 18th Mar. 1922; *Tribune*, 25th Mar. 1922.

²¹⁰ *Meath*, 18th Mar. 1922.

band played the ‘Soldier’s Song’. They thus cultivated the musical rituals of a national army and positioned de Valera as national leader.²¹¹ Their efforts to externalise their opponents from the nationalist tradition implied those who supported the Treaty were unworthy of the heritage that music embodied. A poster by Constance Markievicz (Fig. 4) portrayed a list of song titles painted on a wall – ‘Memory of the Dead’, ‘Felons of the Land’, ‘Kevin Barry’ and ‘Ireland Over All’. The titles were painted over and partially obscured. The caption read: ‘These were the songs of Irish Ireland. The Free Staters who shoot Republicans and fire on prisoners by England’s orders. In the name of the Empire. Can never sing them again!’.²¹² A poster criticising a pro-Treaty election candidate in Dublin made similar accusations: ‘Mr Leonard’, it said, had congratulated the British General who fired on the GPO in 1916. The tagline read ‘God Save the King and his Allies’, associating Leonard with the British national anthem.²¹³ In this representation, the Free State’s perceived subservience to Empire meant that its supporters were unworthy of nationalist anthems (not unlike constitutionalists accused of inviting Irishmen to ‘come along and join the British army’ in 1918).

Music also contested political space, demonstrating further similarities with the conflict between constitutionalists and Sinn Féin. In Cork in March 1922, a contingent in the crowd interrupted an address by Michael Collins by singing the ‘Soldier’s Song’. In a demonstration of the contest taking place over nationalist music, Sean McKeon, who was also speaking, responded that they would not be shouted down, and that he had sung the ‘Soldier’s Song’ when ‘there was danger in it’.²¹⁴ When the pro-Treaty Joseph MacBride addressed a meeting in Castlerea in April 1922, opponents singing the

²¹¹ *Freeman’s*, 20th Feb. 1922.

²¹² NLI, These were the songs of Irish Ireland, PD3076TX18.

²¹³ UCDA, Peter Paul Galligan Papers, P25/125.

²¹⁴ *Independent*, 18th Mar. 1922.

‘Soldier’s Song’ similarly interrupted him. MacBride, ‘after repeated attempts to make himself heard, remained silent for a time. The singing continued unabated and it appeared as if there would be no more speech making’. Thus Republicans used music to undermine the pro-Treaty speaker’s command over the immediate space.²¹⁵ Such practices continued even after the ceasefire. When the new government was inaugurated in October 1923, ‘a party with a drum’ and ‘three or four instruments’ interrupted proceedings, holding placards in support of Republican hunger strikers.²¹⁶

The opposing factions also staked their competing claims to nationalist traditions through musical performances commemorating their respective martyrs, primarily at public funerals. At Cathal Brugha’s funeral, following his death during the siege of the Four Courts, anti-Treaty politicians attended as bands played ‘funeral music’ and the Last Post. By employing State funeral rituals, dissidents placed Brugha’s death in the tradition of other nationalist martyrs.²¹⁷ In November 1923, Republican prisoners Denis Barry and Andy Sullivan died on hunger strike. A memorial parade headed by a pipe band in Cork was amalgamated with a Manchester Martyrs commemoration, conflating contemporary martyrs with their Fenian predecessors.²¹⁸ The same was true of pro-Treaty funerals, most prominently that of Michael Collins. Multiple Army bands and that of the Dublin Metropolitan Police played the ‘Dead March’ and a bugler played the Last Post. The scale of the event and the sense of a national occasion was evidenced in descriptions of it assuming ‘proportions even larger than that of Parnell’s funeral’.²¹⁹ The State thus positioned Collins in a heroic nationalist tradition.

²¹⁵ *Western*, 8th Apr. 1922.

²¹⁶ *Independent*, 22nd Oct. 1923.

²¹⁷ *Fermanagh*, 15th Jul. 1922.

²¹⁸ *Examiner*, 26th Nov. 1923.

²¹⁹ *Western*, 2nd Sept. 1922; *Examiner*, 29th Aug. 1922.



Figure 4 – Constance Markievicz, 'These were the songs of Irish Ireland', c. 1922 (NLI, PD3076TX18).

Additionally, the Free State sought to associate itself with emblems of Gaelic culture.

Army Pipers' bands performed at féiseanna in Ballieboro and Bandon in June and July

1922 respectively and at Cavan in June 1923.²²⁰ The anti-Treaty IRA did not, perhaps because it was avoiding public appearances after the outbreak of hostilities. The government, however, used féiseanna to co-opt the Gaelic movement into the cause of the new State. The Gaelic League reciprocated with its own ends in mind. At the Bandon féis, after the army band performed, the chairman stated that ‘the day was not far off when they would all be able to speak in Irish’.²²¹ The presence of the Free State army at féiseanna, therefore, provided official recognition and a public occasion through which cultural revivalists encouraged the new State to embrace authentic Gaelic characteristics.

The experiences of the anti-Treaty IRA (guerrilla warfare, prison) were similar to those of the IRA during the War of Independence. So too were its musical cultures. When interviewed by Ernie O’Malley, Greg Ashe stated that after a skirmish with Free State soldiers he and colleagues sang ‘Soldiers are we and we thought we fought for Ireland’.²²² Ashe’s testimony suggests that the private commemoration and dark humour characterising IRA songs before 1921 continued during the Civil War. Another anti-Treaty fighter, Oscar Traynor, described singing as an accompaniment to marching.²²³ Prison remained a conducive space for Republican music. In his Civil War memoir, *The Singing Flame*, Ernie O’Malley described ‘concerts’ in Mountjoy Jail, including nationalist songs such as ‘Whack fol’ the Diddle’ and the ‘Three-Coloured Ribbon’ (both by the pro-Treaty Peadar Kearney; songs had a life of their own beyond the will of their lyricists).²²⁴ Greg Ashe also recalled a song he enjoyed while interned stating,

²²⁰ *Meath*, 3rd Jun. 1922; *Star*, 8th Jul. 1922; *Anglo-Celt*, 23rd Jun. 1923.

²²¹ *Star*, 8th Jul. 1922

²²² O’Malley, *Men*, p. 127.

²²³ M. Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (London, 1988), p. 65.

²²⁴ E. O’Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Dublin, 1978), p. 228.

with further dark humour, ‘if we go near the wire the sentry will fire/And it’s all for the will of the people’.²²⁵ The limited contemporary material supports the argument that music continued to commemorate, entertain and boost morale. In his diary, Frank Gallagher described singing the ‘Soldier’s Song’ with his fellow prisoners when they were transported to Gormanston Internment Camp. It gave him, he said, a ‘feeling of elation’.²²⁶ Music functioned identically for male and female prisoners, with the exception that women were more likely to draw upon songs written by women, such as Markievicz’s ‘Battle Hymn’.²²⁷ In her letters from prison, Annie McKeon described songs mocking their imprisonment including one entitled ‘Would you like to go back to Kilmainham Jail?’, while a concert produced by female prisoners included ‘Faith of our Fathers’ ‘in memory of all those who gave their lives for the Irish Republic in the Rising of Easter 1916’.²²⁸

Alongside communal entertainment, prisoners used music for private commemoration. Joseph Consedine wrote songs while incarcerated, as others had during the War of Independence. His songs placed his experiences firmly in a nationalist tradition. ‘The Fighting West’ invoked Davis’s ‘The West’s Awake’ with its celebratory opening ‘Hurrah! The west’s ablaze’.²²⁹ There is little evidence that music ever went beyond entertainment and commemoration. O’Malley was more qualified in his contemporary letters than in his memoir. In 1923, he wrote that while songs ‘help to strengthen national faith... it is of little use to sing unless your soul is in your song’.²³⁰ Republicans

²²⁵ O’Malley, *Men*, p. 129.

²²⁶ TCDA, Frank Gallagher Diary, 8th Jan. 1923, MS 10,051/9.

²²⁷ KG, ‘Gaol Concert Programmes’, 20ND1D1108; CO 904/37/693.

²²⁸ KG, ‘Annie McKeon to Brigid O’Mallane, 30th Jul. 1923’, 20LR1B22.

²²⁹ NLI, Poems of Prison Camp by Joseph S. Consedine, MS 34,956.

²³⁰ ‘E. O’Malley to S. Humphreys, 25th Dec. 1923’, E. O’Malley, *Prisoners: The Civil War Letters of Ernie O’Malley* (ed. by R. English and C. O’Malley) (Dublin, 1991), p. 128.

outside prison, finally, used music to engage with the cause, express support, and raise funds for the dependants of interned Republicans through concerts. A concert in Dublin included ‘God Save Ireland’ and the ‘Soldier’s Song’, asserting an ideological link between Fenianism, the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War.²³¹ Similarly, if and when prisoners were released, crowds greeting them ‘cheered & sang songs’, as Rosamund Jacob described in January 1923.²³²

At the end of the Civil War, nationalist music presented several challenges for the Free State. Nationalist music represented an ideal that, for many, was not realised in existing arrangements. Free State politicians made sincere attempts to associate themselves with nationalist music, but the need for them to do so demonstrated the potential appeal of political ideals more radical than their own. Music was associated with martyrdom, militant groups, and intimidation. Those associations presented as many problems as possibilities for Irish politicians. Ireland demonstrated no desire to ‘give up singing these songs’ after the Treaty, and the same was true after 1923. Music articulated a disappointment with nationalism’s promise on both sides, providing a vehicle through which to express dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

²³¹ *Freeman’s*, 6th Feb. 1923.

²³² NLI, RJD, 10th Jan. 1923, MS 32,582/43.

3

Music and the Politics of Nationalism in Independent Ireland, 1923-1972

I

‘Three-Quarters of a Nation Once Again’: Music and Party Politics

The Civil War ended in 1923, but many nationalists remained dissatisfied in a country with a British Head of State and an Oath of Allegiance to the Crown. Sinn Féin refused to recognise the Free State, and abstained from the Dáil. In 1926, de Valera attempted to change that policy to one of Sinn Féin taking up its parliamentary seats on the condition that there was a majority supporting abolition of the oath, but the party rejected his proposal. Instead, he formed a new party, Fianna Fáil.¹ Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932 and abolished the oath. The pro-treaty party, Cumann na nGaedheal, was now in opposition. In September 1933, it rebranded itself as Fine Gael having aligned with Eoin O’Duffy’s Blueshirt movement. The Blueshirts advocated their own nationalist credentials. They also drew heavily upon the symbolism of European fascism, even if they did not fully embrace its politics.² Fine Gael ended the Blueshirt relationship within a year, and although some in the IRA supported de Valera, his commitment to constitutional methods saw their relationship deteriorate. His governments imprisoned IRA activists, particularly after 1956 when a resurgent IRA led an unsuccessful military campaign against partition. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael established themselves as the

¹ N. Whelan, *Fianna Fáil: A Biography of the Party* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 14-17.

² M. Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 23-25, 38.

dominant parties, with Labour a distant third. Fianna Fáil in particular attacked Labour's socialism as anti-Irish, anti-Catholic and essentially Communist.³ All parties opposed partition in principle, but made few efforts towards ending it even after the start of the civil rights campaign in Northern Ireland during the late 1960s. This section argues that nationalist music was an important, though often hollow, propaganda tool for parties of almost all shades in independent Ireland.

The sudden existence of an Irish State provided a new, local patron for Irish culture. Through education, commemoration, broadcasting and funding bodies such as Bord Fáilte (the tourist board, founded 1924) and the Arts Council (founded 1951), the government could influence culture (including, to an extent, censorship).⁴ Similar bodies existed in Northern Ireland, notably the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA, formed 1942), which became the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 1962. Free State patronage often favoured political and cultural nationalism, particularly after Fianna Fáil came to power. Education policy emphasised the language, while State commemorations highlighted the heroes of nationalist history.⁵ Their focal point was the Easter Rising, a moment of ideological purity and unity (unlike the compromise of the Treaty or the division of the Civil War). The high mark of these commemorations was the enormous celebrations of the Rising's golden jubilee in 1966.

Increasingly, cultural policy encountered new technologies. The BBC began broadcasting in Britain in 1922, and Northern Ireland in 1924. Its broadcasts reached

³ M. Gallagher, *The Irish Labour Party in Transition 1957-1982* (Manchester, 1982), pp. 14, 93.

⁴ Morash, *Media in Ireland*, p. 141.

⁵ S. O'Cathain, 'Education in the New Ireland' in F. MacManus (ed.), *The Years of the Great Test 1926-1939* (Cork, 1967), p. 110.

Ireland, where support for a rival domestic broadcaster increased.⁶ 2RN, later Radio Éireann, began transmitting in 1926. The State-owned television provider, Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), followed in 1961.⁷ Both services were partly funded through advertising, creating a tension between the English language services that audiences preferred and the Irish language material that the Gaelic League and government encouraged.⁸ Specific countries, theoretically, were assigned specific frequencies. However, radio waves did not respect national borders. Thus, the lax enforcement of the rules in one country, Luxembourg, allowed a so-called ‘pirate’ station, Radio Luxembourg, to broadcast into Britain (and consequently Ireland) from 1933. The station’s independence from State authority (unlike Radio Éireann and the BBC) allowed it to innovate and attract advertisers. Radio Luxembourg was the first to have a chart show, in 1948, and gave twice as much airtime to music as the BBC. It appealed to young people, whose increasing disposable income made them an ideal audience for record companies and made the station financially successful.⁹ Others followed, including ‘Radio Caroline’, which broadcast from a ship in the North Sea.¹⁰ The BBC and Radio Luxembourg were the main competitors of Radio Éireann, which played nineteen hours of music per week, heavily fought over by interest groups and musicians, for whom broadcasting quickly became the primary mode of patronage. It lagged behind Radio Luxembourg, however; Radio Éireann did not broadcast a chart show, for example, until 1962. In terms of live performance in Ireland, the beneficiaries were

⁶ Diocesan Archives (henceforth DA), Dublin, McQaid Papers, AB8/A/II/16.

⁷ J. J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 647; *Sunday*, 10th Jan. 1926; R. Savage, *Irish Television: The Political and Social Origins* (Cork, 1996), p. xi.

⁸ Savage, *Television*, pp. 4-6, 139-142.

⁹ R. Nichols, *Radio Luxembourg: The Station of the Stars* (London, 1983); C. Holohan, ‘More than a revival of memories? 1960s youth and the 1916 Rising’ in M. Daly and M. O’Callaghan (eds.), *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007), p. 185.

¹⁰ Morash, *Media*, pp. 170, 186.

‘Showbands’, small groups who played cover versions of chart hits.¹¹ Politically, broadcasts meant that organisations did not necessarily need to gather audiences together to create shared musical experiences; the signal penetrated homes, meaning that communities existed simply ‘by virtue of being addressed’.¹² Thus, politics often drove content, notably when RTÉ televised the Rising’s golden jubilee celebrations in 1966 (the first year in which the majority of Irish households owned a television).¹³

Music’s contribution to an Irish nation-building project is demonstrated in the selection of the national anthem. As Zdzislaw Much states, national anthems represent ‘the values of the nation and the state with which citizens are expected to identify’.¹⁴ Irish embassies abroad frequently requested prints and recordings of the anthem’s music and lyrics in anticipation of events at which Ireland was represented, either by cultural groups or politicians.¹⁵ However, Ireland’s seemingly incomplete revolution left the values with which the people and government wished to identify open to contestation. The ‘Soldier’s Song’ was the anthem of the revolution and the stated preference of William Cosgrave, head of the Cumann na nGaedheal government.¹⁶ Nonetheless, the remaining unionists in Ireland, who identified the Free State as part of a wider British entity, still identified with the monarchy and so preferred ‘God Save the King’. On several occasions the government expressed concern about audiences singing the British

¹¹ *Radio Éireann Handbook* (Dublin, 1955), pp. 6, 32.

¹² Born, ‘Introduction’, p. 30.

¹³ M. Daly, “‘Less a Commemoration of the Actual Achievements and more a Commemoration of the Hopes of the men of 1916’” in M. Daly and M. O’Callaghan (eds.), *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007), p. 21.

¹⁴ Z. Much, ‘National Anthems: The Case of Chopin as a National Composer’ in M. Stokes (ed.), *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Space* (Oxford, 1994), p. 61.

¹⁵ E.g. NAI, ‘National Anthem’, Dept. of Foreign Affairs Papers (henceforth DFA)/2007/63/71.

¹⁶ NAI, ‘The Soldiers’ Song: adoption as national anthem and requests for information regarding words, music and format’, Department of the Taoiseach Papers (henceforth TSCH)/3/S3767A.

anthem, for instance at the traditionally unionist Dublin Horse Show in 1928.¹⁷ The organisers of a dance in Drogheda similarly refused to play the ‘Soldier’s Song’, and only agreed not to play ‘God Save the King’ at the government’s insistence.¹⁸

Discomfort with the ‘Soldier’s Song’ was not limited to stubborn unionists, but also applied to moderate nationalists. Seán Lester, government Director of Publicity, former *Freeman’s Journal* editor and future League of Nations Secretary-General was one example.¹⁹ Lester described the musical standard and militant lyrics of the ‘Soldier’s Song’ as ‘hardly suitable’ for a national anthem and recommended Moore’s ‘Let Erin Remember’ instead.²⁰ The famous Irish tenor John McCormack shared Lester’s concerns about musical quality. McCormack said that the ‘Soldier’s Song’ had ‘nothing to commend itself’ musically and was ‘unworthy’ of a musical nation.²¹ Nor were Lester’s political objections unique. The Public Accounts Committee Chairman believed that the ‘Soldier’s Song’ was only chosen because the IRA demanded it ‘at the point of the gun’.²² James Dillon, an independent in the Dáil and a future Fine Gael leader, criticised the anthem and called it the ‘victory song of Sinn Féin’.²³ The *Dublin Evening Mail* held a competition for an alternative anthem, but the winning entry (‘God of our Ireland’) made no impact.²⁴ The Gaelic League and GAA supported the ‘Soldier’s Song’ but, preferring a stronger commitment to language revival than the two Gaelic words in Kearney’s original, used full Irish translations.²⁵ The translation that the

¹⁷ NAI, TSCH/3/S3767A; NAI, ‘National anthem: playing when the President is present’, Office of the Secretary to the President Papers (Henceforth PRES)/1/P724.

¹⁸ NAI, ‘National Anthem: not been played at Mercers and Drogheda Dance’, TSCH/3/S7393.

¹⁹ *Irish Press* (henceforth *Press*), 15th Jan. 1959.

²⁰ NAI, TSCH/3/S3767A.

²¹ *Press*, 8th Oct. 1935.

²² NAI, ‘National Anthem: Copyright’, TSCH/3/S7395A.

²³ *Donegal*, 28th May 1932.

²⁴ Morris, *Our Own Devices*, p. 58.

²⁵ *Independent*, 8th Jun. 1931; *Tribune*, 20th May 1933.

government eventually adopted – ‘Amhrán na bhFiann’ – was by Liam Ó Rinn, chief translator for the Dáil and a former IRA member who had known Peadar Kearney.²⁶ Several parties criticised Ó Rinn’s translation of the opening line as ‘Sinne Fianna Fáil’. His translation pre-dated de Valera’s party, but some Fine Gael supporters nonetheless sang ‘Sinne Fine Gael’ instead.²⁷ A small and unrepresentative minority, conversely, chose to define the Irish nation as socialist. Jim Ryan, on the left of Fianna Fáil, wanted an Irish translation of ‘The Internationale’ to be the anthem, rather than what he disparaged as the ‘byreland stuff’ of the ‘Soldier’s Song’.²⁸

The new anthem left sports teams representing the whole island in a precarious position, most notoriously the Rugby Union team. In 1923, when French officials asked the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) to specify its preferred anthem, the IRFU asked for ‘St Patrick’s Day’.²⁹ At the same fixture the following year, bands only played the ‘Marseillaise’.³⁰ Ahead of matches, newspapers often speculated on whether the rugby team would use the ‘Soldier’s Song’ (especially after it was confirmed as the anthem in 1926). Bands played it at matches in Dublin if the Governor-General attended in recognition of the State in which the match was played rather than the team’s State allegiance, but the IRFU preferred no anthem at all before away matches because the team ‘represented both the Free State and Northern Ireland’.³¹ One TD called the IRFU ‘shoneens’ in response.³² Northern Irish newspapers, conversely, criticised the IRFU’s failure to use ‘God Save the King’ instead of the ‘Soldier’s Song’, although the team

²⁶ MSPC, William Ring, Ref MSP34REF21830.

²⁷ *An t-Óglác*, 3rd Nov. 1923; NAI, ‘National Anthem: Irish Text’, TSCH/98/6/53.

²⁸ NAI, TSCH/98/6/53

²⁹ *Freeman’s*, 14th Apr. 1923.

³⁰ *Newsletter*, 2nd Jan. 1925.

³¹ *Independent*, 10th Feb. 1928; *Western*, 30th Jun. 1928; *Donegal*, 15th Jun. 1929.

³² *Examiner*, 19th Mar. 1930.

did stand to the British Anthem at matches in Belfast.³³ Several bodies condemned this practice in 1953 (the first match in Belfast since the declaration of the Republic in 1948).³⁴

The lack of consensus among Ireland's new administrators, coupled with the bottleneck of government bureaucracy, meant that official adoption of the 'Soldier's Song' was lengthy and haphazard. The matter first came to government attention in 1924 after enquiries from the organisers of the Paris Olympics. Seán Lester explained to government colleagues that there was 'no accepted national anthem', adding 'this is beginning to be noticed'. Ireland used 'Let Erin Remember' for the Olympics, before the Executive Council (cabinet) considered the question in April. Ministers did not make a final decision, but stated a preference for the 'Soldier's Song'. When they discussed the anthem again in July 1926, they officially approved the 'Soldier's Song', a decision they confirmed in the Dáil two weeks later. In October 1928, the government deemed the anthem too long and commissioned the German composer and head of the Irish Army Band, Colonel Fritz Brase, to compose a shorter version for brass and reed band, comprising the first verse and chorus. The government approved his composition in April 1929, followed by his orchestral version in February 1932. Later that year, the government concluded that this iteration was still too long, and reduced it to the chorus alone.³⁵

³³ *Newsletter*, 26th Feb. 1929.

³⁴ *Independent*, 2nd Mar. 1931; *Limerick*, 26th Jan. 1953; *Press*, 5th Feb. 1953.

³⁵ NAI, TSCH/3/S367A.

The government officially sanctioned music for the national anthem more quickly than it did the lyrics.³⁶ State-published versions included no lyrics, and bands only played the music at State events.³⁷ Indeed, when Paddy Heeney's descendants and Peadar Kearney attempted to sue for unpaid royalties in 1931, the government claimed that it owed Kearney no money as it had not adopted the lyrics. The parties eventually reached a settlement, whereby the government paid the plaintiffs £1,000 for ownership of the copyright in words and music.³⁸ Nevertheless, the State did not publish any official lyrics until 1951.³⁹ In this, it was some way behind the rest of the country. The army newspaper *An T'Oglac* first printed Ó Rinn's version in 1926, and bands performed it regularly at sporting events, notably the State-sponsored Tailteann Games.⁴⁰ It was often army bands that performed at these events, and thus unsurprisingly they used the lyrics published in their newspaper.⁴¹ That the government eventually settled upon a shorter, Gaelic version was advantageous in that it omitted more troubling references like that to the 'Saxon foe', and made the militant lyrics less obvious than they might have been in English. Notably, the Gaelic lyrics attracted fewer criticisms from moderates than the English, although that may reflect that the State had by then existed for longer. Despite the delays and concerns, 'Amhrán na bhFiann' was always the most likely choice. Ultimately, the values it represented were those that offered its advocates the most political currency, evidenced in its widespread use, especially by the popular and highly visible GAA. This, coupled with its revolutionary associations, gave it unrivalled populist value.

³⁶ NAI, TSCH/3/S367A.

³⁷ NAI, 'The Soldiers' Song: adoption as national anthem and requests for information regarding words, music and format', TSCH/3/S3767B; *Independent*, 4th Nov. 1926.

³⁸ NAI, TSCH/3/S7395A.

³⁹ NAI, TSCH/3/S3767B.

⁴⁰ *An T'Oglac*, 3rd Nov. 1923; *Press*, 1st Feb. 1986; *Kildare Observer*, 18th Jun. 1932.

⁴¹ *Independent*, 24th Aug. 1928.

The value of revolutionary songs was not limited to ‘Amhrán na bhFiann’. After partition, nationalist music was synonymous with efforts towards unification. Those attacking partition appropriated ‘A Nation Once Again’ with particular ease and potency. In 1938, referring to partition, de Valera praised the Irish people’s ‘determination’ to ‘struggle on, no matter what the sacrifice would be, until Ireland was truly a nation once again’.⁴² Similarly, at a GAA dinner in 1929, county councillor W. F. Quinlan insisted the GAA had an important role in making Ireland ‘free and individual’, and that ‘every true Irishman wanted to see the day when Ireland will be “a nation once again”’. Clearly, he felt that was yet to be achieved. The audience then sang ‘A Nation Once Again’.⁴³ As this suggests, the GAA used music to convey its nationalist credentials. When bands played the national anthem at its events, the organisation required that competitors stand and face the Irish flag.⁴⁴ This music was popular. Rosamund Jacob had little interest in sport, but made lengthy comments on the music at GAA events in her diary.⁴⁵ The frequency with which collectors for the Folklore Commission encountered nationalist songs, furthermore, demonstrates that their popularity went beyond the politically active.⁴⁶

Political parties used popular nationalist music to attract support. Upon the initial formation of Fianna Fáil, social events with music were opportunities for Republicans like Rosamund Jacob to discuss whether to support the party.⁴⁷ Fianna Fáil’s methods did not follow violent nationalist traditions, and songs like ‘Sean South of Garryowen’

⁴² *Press*, 7th Jun. 1938.

⁴³ *Kerryman*, 14th Dec. 1929.

⁴⁴ GAAA, Activities Committee Minute Books, 19th Aug. 1977, AC/01.

⁴⁵ NLI, RJD, 29th Jun. 1932, MS 32,582/67.

⁴⁶ IFC 1190:344.

⁴⁷ NLI, RJD, 14th Nov. 1931, MS 32,582/68.

(discussed in Chapter Four) associated with IRA activities after the end of the Civil War were conspicuously absent from its repertoire. Nevertheless, the party consciously employed musical motifs asserting its claim to nationalist traditions. The names of local party *cumann* (branches) and bands often invoked ballads and songwriters, for instance the ‘Thomas Davis *Cumann*’ and ‘Kevin Barry *Cumann*’, or the ‘Terence MacSwiney Piper Band’.⁴⁸ ‘Amhrán na bhFiann’ featured regularly at party gatherings, as did other nationalist songs.⁴⁹ At a concert in May 1947 the band played ‘Wearing of the Green’ and a Civil War song entitled ‘Soldiers of the Legion of the Rearguard’.⁵⁰ The latter was written by Jack O’Sheehan (who was imprisoned for singing the ‘Soldier’s Song’ in 1918). ‘Soldiers of the Legion of the Rearguard’ encourages the ‘rearguard’ (the anti-treaty IRA) to ‘raise their battle cry’ with the guidance of Pearse, Clarke and MacDermott (all executed in 1916). The chorus praises de Valera’s leadership:

Legion of the Rearguard answering Ireland’s call,
Hark their martial tramp is heard from Cork to Donegal
Tone and Emmet guide you, though your task be hard,
De Valera leads you, Soldiers of the Legion of the Rearguard.

The opening dynamic, *fortissimo* (very loud), and performance instruction *marziale* (martial), convey that this is a military anthem, reinforced by the regular, marching rhythm. For the chorus, the vocals remain at *fortissimo*, but the accompaniment reduces to *mezzo forte* (moderately loud), emphasising the lyrics and, therefore, de Valera and the call to arms. The longer note and augmented subdominant chord at the singing of de Valera’s name reemphasise his leadership. Stylistically, therefore, O’Sheehan’s song

⁴⁸ UCDA, Fianna Fáil Papers (henceforth FF), P176/243(29); UCDA, FF, P176/279(19); UCDA, FF, P176/370; UCDA, FF, P176/41(1).

⁴⁹ *Donegal*, 17th Jul. 1937.

⁵⁰ UCDA, Frank Aiken Papers (henceforth FAP), P104/1645.

maintained the simple and militant rebel song style. In citing nationalist heroes, O'Sheehan placed the Civil War in a centuries-old Republican tradition, ultimately and exclusively culminating in de Valera's leadership.⁵¹ The song became Fianna Fáil's anthem, second only to 'Amhrán na bhFiann', and was sung regularly by performers and crowds at events.⁵² Its intended associations were clear. In March 1948, Sean MacEntee said that Fianna Fáil's members had been 'on the right side in the Civil War and could be described as the legion of the rearguard'.⁵³ Thus, the 'rearguard' consisted of those who were consistently dissatisfied with anything short of a united Republic. While Fianna Fáil did not sanction contemporary rebellion, it had no concerns about invoking that of the recent past.

As stated in Chapter Two, supporting the Anglo-Irish Treaty did not imply opposition to a united Republic, nor the musical cultures supporting it. The use of nationalist music to legitimise a contemporary cause was thus not limited to the anti-treaty tradition, and Cumann na nGaedheal often concluded rallies with 'Amhrán na bhFiann'.⁵⁴ The Blueshirts and Fine Gael also used music frequently, including the national anthem at social events.⁵⁵ They printed nationalist songs including 'The West's Asleep' in their newspapers, along with newly composed songs which, although essentially identical in form and style to those of their opponents, promoted their own agenda.⁵⁶ 'A Blueshirt March' directly attacks Fianna Fáil's nationalist pretensions by appropriating the air of

⁵¹ J. O'Sheehan, *The Song of the Legion of the Rearguard: The Rallying-Song of the Republic* (Dublin, 1924).

⁵² *Press*, 26th May 1944; *Press*, 29th May 1951.

⁵³ *Press*, 12th Mar. 1948.

⁵⁴ *Kilkenny*, 25th Feb. 1933.

⁵⁵ *The Blueshirt* (henceforth *Blueshirt*), 17th Nov. 1934

⁵⁶ *Blueshirt*, 2nd Feb. 1935.

‘Legion of the Rearguard’.⁵⁷ The most prominent Blueshirt song was ‘The March of Youth’, also known by its refrain ‘Blueshirts Abu!’, their designated ‘rallying song’:

Bugles are sounding o’er mountain and valley
 Pealing a message to man and to maid,
 Bugles are speaking, they’re sounding the Rally
 Rise, youth of Erin, and lead the crusade.
 Chaste as the midnight skies
 Deathless our Standard flies,
 Etched with the Sign of our historical faith
 Guard we that standard well,
 Sternly each foe repel.
 Up. Youth of Erin, the Blueshirts Abu!⁵⁸

The song has militant connotations (‘bugles’, ‘crusade’) and appeals to a new generation of political actors (‘youth of Erin’), but with implications of historical continuity (‘historical faith’). Later stanzas assert that the Blueshirts are heirs to Michael Collins and the founders of the Free State, providing historical legitimacy to their cause and to the existing State, in contradistinction to the anti-Treaty resonances of Fianna Fáil. The song used the air of ‘O’Donnell Abu’. Like their political rivals, therefore, the Blueshirts used the clarity of nationalist song to position themselves as the culmination of historical ideals. ‘The March of Youth’ and the Blueshirts became synonymous. Members and supporters sang it regularly, and it inspired a poem by W.B. Yeats during his brief flirtation with the movement.⁵⁹ Even after Fine Gael and the Blueshirts split, Fine Gael still employed political music, albeit not on the same scale as Fianna Fáil. TD James Coburn ended all of his party meetings by leading a rendition of ‘A Nation Once Again’ and the party Ard Fheis always concluded with the national anthem.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Blueshirt*, 19th Jan. 1935.

⁵⁸ UCDA, Ernest Blythe Additional Papers, P24/685(a).

⁵⁹ *Examiner*, 30th Apr. 1934; R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life Vol. II: The Arch Poet 1915-1939* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 479-480.

⁶⁰ *Examiner*, 7th Dec. 1953.

The labour movement also engaged with nationalist music to legitimise its cause. As noted in Chapter Two, socialist musical culture was largely absorbed by and subordinated to nationalist music. Some sang ‘The Internationale’ and ‘The Red Flag’, such as Communist protesters at a rally in 1934, but the centre-left deliberately avoided them.⁶¹ Indeed, these two socialist anthems were sung by demonstrators protesting *against* the Labour Party in Dublin in 1936.⁶² They were associated with Communism, which in a distinctly Catholic political culture was unacceptable. When Labour Party delegates from Sligo were accused of singing ‘The Red Flag’ at a trade union congress in 1953, they strenuously denied the claims, blaming the incident emphatically on Northern Irish representatives.⁶³ The Sligo Corporation demanded that the conference organisers apologise for the singing by this ‘bunch of communists’⁶⁴ The labour movement instead asserted its own claim to nationalist traditions through Labour Party founder James Connolly and his song, ‘Watchword of Labour’, which routinely concluded Labour Party conferences.⁶⁵ By invoking Connolly alongside carefully worded rhetoric, the party conflated its cause with nationalism. At a meeting in 1935, bands played ‘Watchword of Labour’ immediately after delegates passed a motion pledging ‘to pursue the twin ideals of independence and social emancipation’.⁶⁶ The party and the unions also played the national anthem and the ‘Watchword of Labour’ after one another at events.⁶⁷ Various groups – Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Blueshirts, Labour – therefore, employed nationalist-inspired music to legitimise their causes.

⁶¹ NAI, ‘Irish Labour Defence League: general file’, Department of Justice Papers (henceforth JUS)/8/338.

⁶² *Leitrim*, 11th Apr. 1936.

⁶³ *Sligo Champion* (henceforth *Sligo*), 17th Aug. 1953.

⁶⁴ *Sligo*, 22nd Aug. 1953.

⁶⁵ *Examiner*, 29th Oct. 1934.

⁶⁶ *Press*, 13th May 1955.

⁶⁷ *Examiner*, 25th May 1937.

Points of departure were subtle, often limited to individual songs, illustrating that while causes differed, the musical language of popular politics was overwhelmingly nationalist.

The musical performance rituals of popular politics similarly reinforced the nationalist credentials of participating organisations. Parades led by bands demonstrated continuity in practice and created an appealing spectacle. The Labour party employed brass and pipe bands for a procession in Bandon attended by 4,000 people in 1934.⁶⁸ In Dublin later that year, the *Leitrim Observer* described an ITGWU band procession as having attracted ‘considerable attention’.⁶⁹ Fianna Fáil made the most extensive use of the spectacle and atmosphere that bands created, and its rituals were remarkably uniform. Typically, when de Valera addressed a rally, marching bands met him outside the town and escorted him to the platform, flanked by former IRA members, before the gathering sang one or both of the national anthem and ‘Soldiers of the Legion of the Rearguard’.⁷⁰ Communal singing symbolised the powerful, collective identity of those gathered. After a rally in Cork in 1934, Fianna Fáil’s newspaper the *Irish Press* estimated that 25,000 sang ‘Legion of the Rearguard’.⁷¹ Its desire to claim that such large numbers (whether exaggerated or not) expressed the same collective vision demonstrates the value such communality carried. The combination of the old IRA, the songs chosen and the spectacle declared that Fianna Fáil embodied the nationalist cause. Colm Tóibín’s *The Heather Blazing* subtly exposes the ironies of Fianna Fáil’s musical rituals in this period. Tóibín’s protagonist Eamon Redmond speaks ahead of de Valera’s arrival at a rally before the 1951 General Election. Alluding to the party’s politics, the character’s

⁶⁸ *Press*, 22nd Jan. 1934; *Kerryman*, 19th Jun. 1937.

⁶⁹ *Leitrim*, 8th Sept. 1934.

⁷⁰ *Press*, 17th Jan. 1933; *Kerryman*, 20th Mar. 1943; *Press*, 4th Feb. 1948.

⁷¹ *Press*, 26th May 1948.

name ironically combines Republican and constitutional history (Éamon de Valera and John Redmond). Likewise, the bands play ‘A Nation Once Again’, suggestive of ending partition, and ‘Boys of Wexford’, the anthem of Redmond’s Parnellite rallies.

Meanwhile, on the doorstep the characters promise voters factories and jobs. The crowd’s adoration for de Valera’s lofty, detached nationalism contrasts almost absurdly with these specific, practical and transparently dishonest pledges.⁷²

The Blueshirts, similarly, used bands to create public spectacles. A Fine Gael parade in Claremont, with 500 Blueshirts headed by a pipe band, was provocative enough for police to attend.⁷³ While Blueshirt parades invoked nationalist ideals, their rituals were distinguished from Fianna Fáil’s through fascist-inspired symbolism. A letter to Blueshirt officers in January 1934 instructed members ‘at any public function at which the National Anthem is played or sung’ to ‘not only stand to attention but give the victory salute’, referring to the raised arm salute associated with far-right movements.⁷⁴ Nationalist music and performance practice therefore combined with fascist imagery to create imposing displays.⁷⁵ Although Fine Gael dropped the salute after it split from the Blueshirts, it maintained these displays. From 1954, at the final rally of each election campaign a guard of the old IRA met the party leader in front of the GPO, with bands leading party branches to the scene from across the city.⁷⁶ The organised musical display combined with the presence of former revolutionaries outside the building most closely associated with 1916 thus capitalised on nationalist associations.⁷⁷ While Fine Gael or Labour parades were never equal in scale or frequency to Fianna Fáil’s, this

⁷² C. Tóibín, *The Heather Blazing* (London, 1992), pp. 158-174.

⁷³ NAI, ‘Disorderly scenes at Fine Gael meeting at Balla (Co. Mayo) on 5 November 1934’, JUS/8/131.

⁷⁴ NAI, ‘League of Youth: documents issued by’, JUS/8/257.

⁷⁵ Cronin, *Blueshirts*, p. 40.

⁷⁶ UCDA, Fine Gael Archives (henceforth FG) P39/GE/30(2).

⁷⁷ UCDA, FG, P39/PR/47(1).

reflects their resources rather than their ideological aspirations. Arrangements for Fine Gael rallies included lengthy negotiations with bands over fees, while ahead of an event in Cork one organiser commented that while a band was desirable, it was also ‘rather expensive’.⁷⁸ There were, notably, fewer events organised by all parties before the 1938 election, held less than a year after the previous election, such that parties had less time to raise funds.

The Blueshirts also used provocative performances to convey their military aspirations, in a similar manner to the Irish Volunteers before 1916. Band-led Blueshirt parades included marches in military formation.⁷⁹ Blueshirts marching in support of imprisoned colleagues also used music to assert the legitimacy of the prisoners’ cause. When bands led a march supporting Matthew Dwyer, arrested for being part of an illegal organisation (the Blueshirts) in 1934, those gathered sang ‘The March of Youth’, asserting that his was a political, not criminal, cause.⁸⁰ The IRA used similar tactics (detailed in Chapter Four). These provocative displays often led to confrontation. In Kilkenny in 1934, Fianna Fáil supporters sang ‘Legion of the Rearguard’ to interrupt Blueshirts who were singing the national anthem. The two sides thus competed over control of the auditory space, and of the right to be identified with the national anthem. The side that performed their nationalist allegiance most effectively could claim political superiority. These confrontations became physical when the two sides began hurling stones at one another.⁸¹ Police recorded similar scenes in Clondalkin in June

⁷⁸ UCDA, FG, P39/GE/64(2-37); UCDA, FG, P39/GE/138; UCDA, FG, P39/C/C/4(7).

⁷⁹ NAI, ‘Disturbance at Fine Gael meeting at Drogheda (Co. Louth) on 27 May 1934’, JUS/8/109.

⁸⁰ NAI, ‘Procession and meeting of League of Youth at Coachford, Co. Cork on 8 April 1934’, JUS/8/21; *Examiner*, 18th Jan. 1934.

⁸¹ NAI, ‘Unlawful assembly at Kilkenny on 26 and 27 May 1934’, JUS/8/95.

1934 when Blueshirts were met by counter-demonstrators singing ‘IRA songs’, leading to clashes and four arrests on assault charges.⁸²

The frequency and potency with which political parties invoked nationalist songs reflected their recurrent use in historical narratives. A band-led procession commemorating the Manchester Martyrs in Limerick in November 1936 concluded with the Last Post, closely associated with both nationalist funerals and the British army.⁸³ A concert in 1943 commemorating the 1798 rebellion featured ‘Memory of the Dead’ and ‘The Boys of Wexford’.⁸⁴ In *Insurrection*, RTÉ’s television drama about the Easter Rising, Cathal Brugha was depicted singing ‘God Save Ireland’.⁸⁵ The witnesses who gave statements to the Bureau of Military History between 1947 and 1957, as demonstrated previously, regularly cited musical examples as emblems of revolutionary prestige. Published memoirs of former IRA fighters like those of Ernie O’Malley and Sean O’Faolain used musical motifs with similar regularity.⁸⁶ Even C. S. Andrews, a former IRA member and hunger striker who professed himself ‘musically speaking... retarded’, littered his memoir with musical quotes, particularly Kearney’s ‘Down by the Glenside’.⁸⁷ These authors largely sought to give their personal narratives a self-aggrandising sense of historical destiny, epitomised by O’Malley when he wrote that he had heard his own name sung at dances during the Anglo-Irish War.⁸⁸ Musical motifs are similarly common in near-contemporary fictional works like Michael Farrell’s *Thy*

⁸² NAI, ‘Fine Gael meeting and Blueshirt parade at Clondalkin, (Co. Dublin)’, JUS/8/66.

⁸³ *Examiner*, 30th Nov. 1936.

⁸⁴ NLI, SDB, MS 39,200.

⁸⁵ R. Higgins, “‘I am the narrator over and above... the caller up of the dead’”: Pageant and Drama in 1966’ in M. Daly and M. O’Callaghan (eds.), *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 163-167.

⁸⁶ O’Malley, *Wound*, p. 278; O’Malley, *Singing*, p. 228; S. O’Faolain, *Vive Moi!* (London, 1993), pp. 4, 11, 25, 142.

⁸⁷ C. S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 18, 21, 53, 86, 102, 186, 294.

⁸⁸ O’Malley, *Wound*, p. 353.

Tears Might Cease in which 'Memory of the Dead' recurs as a nationalist anthem, notably at a school when one pupil expresses his desire to be an 'efficient soldier in the next insurrection'.⁸⁹

Political organisations employed commemorative narratives frequently. Ceremonies made notable use of musical rituals and spectacle, particularly bands. In some instances these efforts were nominally cross-party. In Lyre in 1928, members of Cumann na nGaedheal, Fianna Fáil, Cumann na mBan, the Gaelic League, and the IRA attended an Easter Rising commemoration at which bands played 'national songs'.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, parties clearly saw commemorations as occasions on which to associate their politics with nationalist history. Fianna Fáil commemorated anti-treaty IRA fighters martyred during the Civil War. One Fianna Fáil concert in Dublin in December 1929 commemorated four Republicans (Rory O' Connor, Liam Mellows, Dick Barrett and Joe McKelvey) executed by the Free State in 1922.⁹¹ The Nenagh branch of Fianna Fáil held a concert to commemorate the Easter Rising in 1931.⁹² Fine Gael and the Blueshirts preferred to emphasise the leaders and martyrs of the pro-Treaty tradition. In August 1935, Blueshirt bands led a procession to Béal na Bláth in Cork where Michael Collins was killed. The ceremony itself mimicked military and nationalist practices in playing the Last Post.⁹³ This reinforced the sense that the Blueshirts represented a legitimate military, and publically claimed the heritage of Collins. They also commemorated contemporary martyrs. At a ceremony in January 1936 commemorating Hugh O'Reilly, killed when the IRA attacked a Blueshirt dance, a bugler sounded the

⁸⁹ M. Farrell, *Thy Tears Might Cease* (London, 1984), pp. 129, 247, 442.

⁹⁰ *Kerryman*, 5th May 1928.

⁹¹ UCDA, Desmond Fitzgerald Papers, P80/904(8).

⁹² *Western*, 19th Apr. 1925; *Nenagh*, 4th Apr. 1931.

⁹³ *Examiner*, 19th Aug. 1935.

Last Post before O’Duffy stated that O’Reilly gave ‘his life’s blood in the cause of the country’.⁹⁴ After the Blueshirts and Fine Gael split, the latter continued to claim a revolutionary heritage. In 1957, the party hired bands for a Collins commemoration in Cork.⁹⁵ The labour movement used musical commemorations to reinforce its association with Connolly for the same reason. In 1965, the Dublin Trades Council held its annual Connolly commemoration, during which the band played the Last Post, the Reveille, ‘Watchword of Labour’ and the national anthem.⁹⁶ The combination of military funeral rituals, Connolly’s socialist song, and the national anthem conveyed that the movement saw itself as a legitimate representative of Irish nationalism. The ITGWU and Labour Party also memorialised the Golden Jubilee of the 1913 lockout with a large concert, concluding with ‘Watchword of Labour’.⁹⁷ As the dates of these latter two events suggest, commemorations using music became increasingly frequent as the Rising’s golden jubilee approached in 1966.

The most substantial musical commemorations were State-sponsored. A school textbook entitled *A Ballad History of Ireland for Schools* (1929) used ballads such as ‘A Nation Once Again’ to provide a history that, the publishers argued, would ‘impress the general character of the period on the pupil’s mind’.⁹⁸ With Fianna Fáil in government facing a resurgent IRA that threatened de Valera’s autonomy over Republican traditions, the scale of State-sponsored Easter Rising commemorations increased dramatically from 1935.⁹⁹ Music provided an appropriate nationalist gloss. In April, an

⁹⁴ NLI, Eoin O’Duffy Papers, MS 48,286/16.

⁹⁵ UCDA, FG, P39/C/C/4(7).

⁹⁶ *Examiner*, 20th May 1966.

⁹⁷ *Examiner*, 7th Oct. 1963.

⁹⁸ P. O’Dálaigh, *A Ballad History of Ireland for Schools* (Dublin, 1929), p. 6.

⁹⁹ M. McCarthy, *Ireland’s 1916 Rising: Explorations of History Making, Commemoration and Heritage in Modern Times* (Farnham, 2012), p. 20.

army band played the national anthem when de Valera unveiled a memorial to the Rising in the GPO, accompanied by former members of the IRA and Cumann na mBan.¹⁰⁰ For the 25th anniversary in 1941, over a dozen bands playing ‘national airs’ accompanied a military parade in Dublin.¹⁰¹ The Golden Jubilee in 1966 reached new heights. The government arranged parades and marches of IRA veterans across the country, usually featuring the Last Post and the national anthem.¹⁰² At the State-organised parade in front of the GPO, a ‘vast crowd’ watched as veterans marched led by ‘bands playing stirring national airs’, including ‘Clare’s Dragoons’ by Thomas Davis.¹⁰³ The *Irish Independent* described the latter as ‘that most rousing of Irish airs’ in a review that continued: ‘Trumpets, guns and drums had spoken and now came the roar of the four low flying army jets’.¹⁰⁴ The music, therefore, contributed to a martial timbre culminating in the forceful aerial display. The parade renewed Fianna Fáil’s ‘dedication to a 32-county Irish Republic’, complete with militant musical rituals that, as demonstrated by the emotive reception (‘stirring’, ‘rousing’), contributed to a show of strength.¹⁰⁵ The celebrations inspired a genuine nationalist fervour, epitomised by the six-week run that ‘The Merry Ploughboy’ enjoyed atop the Irish charts. The song, performed by Republican singer Dominic Behan, celebrated the Rising.¹⁰⁶ That fervour was not without restriction. Record companies produced at least fourteen records celebrating the Rising (One by the Limerick Showband included versions of ‘Kevin Barry’, ‘A Nation Once Again’ and ‘The Patriot Game’), but Radio Éireann did not

¹⁰⁰ *Press*, 19th Apr. 1935.

¹⁰¹ *Independent*, 4th Apr. 1941; *Anglo-Celt*, 5th Apr. 1941.

¹⁰² *Cuimhneachan Mhuineacháin, 1916-1966* (Monaghan, 1966), pp. 4-10; *Independent*, 14th Jan. 1966.

¹⁰³ *Press*, 11th Apr. 1966.

¹⁰⁴ *Independent*, 11th Apr. 1966

¹⁰⁵ McCarthy, *Rising*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁶ B. Hanley and S. Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers’ Party* (London, 2010), p. 51.

allow companies to use them in sponsored programmes. Whether this was censorship is unclear, but it appears to have been a commercial rather than a political decision. The companies accused Radio Éireann of having banned records made in ‘praise of our dead heroes’, but the broadcaster said that it simply wanted to avoid ‘duplication’ of its own 1916 programmes.¹⁰⁷ Others suggested that the ban was a means by which to prevent the ‘commercialisation’ of 1916.¹⁰⁸ In any case, the broadcaster played into Republican critiques. In 1957, a Sinn Féin speaker in Leitrim had claimed that ‘Ireland’s patriotic ballads were not being sung on radio because they might raise the spirit of the “misguided” youth’.¹⁰⁹ The broadcaster, he implied, was suppressing nationalist ideals as expressed in music. Radio Éireann appeared to confirm this position in 1966.

Where they offered commemorative capital to political figures, songwriters were also integrated into the national myth. In 1947 and 1952, de Valera attended concerts commemorating the 95th and 100th anniversaries of Thomas Moore’s death.¹¹⁰ De Valera and Fianna Fáil similarly appropriated Thomas Davis. During 1966, de Valera unveiled a statue of Davis and a series of granite tablets bearing lyrics to Davis’s songs outside Trinity College. In his address, de Valera praised Davis’s influence on the revolutionaries of 1916 and his belief in uniting Catholics and Protestants. Referencing Trinity’s Protestant and unionist history, de Valera said he hoped the statue would remind the students that ‘the country was theirs; that they were of the country, that they belonged to it and that they were Irish students’ (although no Protestant schools were

¹⁰⁷ *Independent*, 23rd Mar. 1966; *Independent*, 5th Apr. 1966.

¹⁰⁸ *Evening*, 2nd Mar. 1966.

¹⁰⁹ *Leitrim*, 13th Apr. 1957.

¹¹⁰ *Examiner*, 25th Feb. 1947; *Independent*, 26th Feb. 1952.

invited to contribute singers to the choirs that sang ‘A Nation Once Again’).¹¹¹ Both Davis and Moore had established reputations in the public consciousness via radio programmes, public lectures and published biographies.¹¹² These commemorations, therefore, did not raise the profile of the songwriters, but rather associated them with de Valera. Songwriters who were part of the IRA were notably absent from official narratives. Séamus de Búrca’s biography of his uncle Peadar Kearney (1957) was well received, but reviews suggested that Kearney’s part in the revolution was ‘simple’, unlike the inspirational role de Valera assigned to Davis.¹¹³ Sales, furthermore, were low, and de Búrca was forced to sell copies himself to acquaintances at reduced prices.¹¹⁴ Kearney remained absent from official commemorations. Jimmy Mulkerens likewise became a figure of Mulkerens family folklore, but lacked the profile necessary for inclusion in the national narrative.¹¹⁵ Joseph Crofts and Joseph Stanley were similarly absent, while Maeve Cavanagh’s profile afforded de Valera’s attendance at her funeral but little else.¹¹⁶ Of the revolutionary songwriters, only former Sinn Féin President and TD Brian O’Higgins was substantially commemorated in the form of a four day festival incorporating football, cycling, music and dancing in his memory in 1965.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ *Independent*, 18th Apr. 1966; R. Higgins, ‘Sites of Memory and Memorial’, M. Daly and M. O’Callaghan (eds.) *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007), p. 281.

¹¹² NAI, ‘Proposal to put a commemoration album of songs by Thomas Moore on sale’, DFA/5/338/163/1; NLI, RJD, 16th Oct. 1932, MS 32,582/71; S. MacCall, *Thomas Moore* (London, 1935); H. Jones, *The Harp that Once: A Chronicle of the Life of Thomas Moore* (New York, 1937); C. G. Duffy, *Short Life of Thomas Davis* (London, 1896).

¹¹³ Búrca, *Soldier’s*; NLI, SDB, MS 29,125/5; NLI, SDB, MS 39,123/1; NLI, SBD, MS 39,125/2; *Independent*, 22nd Feb. 1958.

¹¹⁴ *Independent*, 29th Oct. 1958; NLI, SDB, MS 39,130.

¹¹⁵ Interview, Val Mulkerens.

¹¹⁶ *Press*, 22nd Apr. 1960.

¹¹⁷ *Meath*, 29th May 1965.

With so many movements claiming the nationalist musical repertoire, groups also attempted to externalise opponents from that repertoire. In 1927, Fianna Fáil's J. P. Bowles accused Cumann na nGaedheal of 'saying at the time of the Treaty that it was a stepping stone but they formed into steps to Buckingham Palace where they could sing "Rule Britannia"'.¹¹⁸ In 1937 in Nenagh, Fianna Fáil's Sean Gleeson accused Fine Gael TD Dan Morrissey of telling a meeting that 'The Red Flag' and not the 'Soldier's Song' was the national anthem.¹¹⁹ In both cases, opponents portrayed Fine Gael as terminally attached to the musical emblems of movements contrary to nationalism. Fine Gael responded in kind. At a selection of candidates in 1938, Thomas O'Higgins (later a Fine Gael cabinet minister) claimed that Fianna Fáil had 'shed everything for which it had stood' and were now 'a kind of broken-down jazz band, half of which played "Rule Britannia" and half "God Save Ireland"'.¹²⁰ By associating Fianna Fáil with jazz (see Chapter Five) and British patriotism he accused them of two musical sins widely deemed as antithetical to Irish nationalism and culture. Similarly, a former Labour Senator, Michael Colgan, attacked his ex-colleagues in 1944 when he claimed that in fifteen years of Labour membership he only heard the 'Soldier's Song' once, and that at his own impetus. He said that he was 'a nationalist before I am a Labour man', accusing the party leadership of being 'educated in the Lenin-school in Moscow'.¹²¹ By asserting that Labour did not play the anthem, however inaccurately, he externalised the party from nationalist traditions and from its national allegiance, associating it instead with international Communism. Parties also published satirical songs to this effect. A Fianna Fáil song in 1932 accused Fine Gael leader William Cosgrave of aiding Britain in the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations:

¹¹⁸ *Tribune*, 4th Jan. 1927.

¹¹⁹ *Nenagh*, 26th Jan. 1937.

¹²⁰ *Press*, 25th May 1938.

¹²¹ *Press*, 23rd May 1944.

Oh when the bold bad shiners had put us on the run,
 And our black and tans and peelers were weary of the fun:
 Twas one of the rebel Hirish who helped to break our fall:
 The Bold Billy Cosgrave, who's the terror of them all.¹²²

Cosgrave's apparent collaboration in the negotiations, therefore, saves the British, who were otherwise 'on the run' from the IRA. By labelling Cosgrave one of the 'rebel Hirish', the song belittles his contribution to nationalism, categorising him as a comic stage Irishman. Fine Gael mocked de Valera in 'De Valera's band', set to the air of the Bing Crosby's comic song 'Macnamara's Band'. The penultimate verse states:

Just now I've changed my tactics and the colour of my coat,
 I'm all for the Republic but don't think me such a goat,
 For if I see John Bull object I'll tell that foolish bloke,
 That diction'ry republicans are my latest kind of joke.

The up-beat G-major key, simple and repetitive rhythms, and concluding cadence, convey the comic effect, as de Valera's opponents undermine his revolutionary credentials by accusing him of subservience to Britain's 'John Bull'. The chorus, meanwhile, repeats the refrain 'Fiddle-dee-dee I'm de Valera'. Just as Fianna Fáil classified Cosgrave as 'Hirish', Fine Gael associated de Valera with disparaging stage Irish stereotypes, far from his preferred heroic image.¹²³ These efforts only underline the necessity that parties placed upon associations with nationalist music, as they sought a moral advantage by questioning and disrupting their opponents' claims to that music.

¹²² UCDA, FAP, P104/1799.

¹²³ UCDA, FG, P39/PR/12(3).

It is often asserted that it became unacceptable to sing ‘rebel songs’ after the outbreak of the Troubles.¹²⁴ Mainstream political groups did not adopt the new rebel songs explicitly praising Republican paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. RTÉ, similarly, did not give any airtime to certain songs that ‘could create tension in Northern Ireland’.¹²⁵ Additionally, a minority of moderate voices expressed renewed concerns about the propriety of the national anthem. A correspondent to the *Western People* suggested that when ‘a peaceful conclusion could now result in the ending of partition’, the existing anthem’s militant lyrics were unsuitable. Nevertheless, that he suggested ‘A Nation Once Again’ as an alternative demonstrates that he did not consider rebel songs to be anathema more broadly.¹²⁶ Attacks on the British anthem, furthermore, were more frequent and more passionate. After Bloody Sunday, the *Irish Press* printed a letter supporting calls from Sinn Féin for the Irish rugby team to boycott its upcoming match against England because players would be required to ‘stand to attention for the national anthem of an oppressive foreign power’.¹²⁷ In this interpretation, the British anthem was a colonial symbol, just as it had been for Terence MacSwiney over fifty years previously. Such statements epitomise the use of music to construct a nationalist identity centred on resistance to the British other.

Despite its revolutionary connotations, for most of those in mainstream politics nationalist music still appealed. After the authorities in Northern Ireland introduced internment for suspected Republican dissidents in 1971, Mayo priest Fr. Morahan encouraged the audience at a GAA event to participate in ‘non-violent demonstrations against oppression in the North’. ‘I admire their courage’, he continued, ‘I rejoice with

¹²⁴ R. Drew, *Ronnie* (Dublin, 2008).

¹²⁵ *Independent*, 21st Aug. 1971.

¹²⁶ *Sunday*, 13th Jan. 1974; *Western*, 6th Sept. 1969.

¹²⁷ *Independent*, 8th Feb. 1972; *Press*, 8th Feb. 1972.

their escapes into freedom: and from this assembly, send through the barbs of a flagrantly unjust restriction our salute and brotherly encouragement to the “men behind the wire””.¹²⁸ The ‘men behind the wire’ referred to an anti-internment ballad of the same name and conveys the extent to which such songs became associated with support for Republicans in Northern Ireland. At Fianna Fáil’s political rallies, the honour guard of Old IRA became less common, but this may reflect the dwindling number of veterans rather than any political impropriety.¹²⁹ The national anthem remained integral to Fianna Fáil’s political pageantry, regularly concluding rallies and meetings.¹³⁰ Even in 1976, when the reality of Republican violence was abundantly clear, the organisers of Fianna Fáil’s 50th anniversary concert insisted that a ‘national tone might be given to the items’ by the inclusion of rebel songs, including ‘Kevin Barry’.¹³¹ The programme cover pictured de Valera behind a banner bearing the opening lyrics of the ‘Soldier’s Song’ in 1918. It also featured the lyrics of ‘Legion of the Rearguard’, which the committee intended to facilitate the audience singing it ‘in unison’.¹³² They included the Foyle Singers, a choir from Derry, to give a ‘Northern Ireland flavour to the concert’.¹³³ That Fianna Fáil invited this group from the town at the epicentre of the Troubles to sing ‘A Nation Once Again’ can only be seen as a reference to partition.¹³⁴ Fianna Fáil, therefore, were not uneasy about engaging with nationalist music nor its political connotations. Its opponents followed a similar pattern. At Fine Gael’s 1973 Ard Fheis, an electric organist played ‘Step Together’ and ‘God Save Ireland’ as the party’s Presidential candidate, Tom O’Higgins, walked onto stage, asserting Fine Gael’s claim

¹²⁸ *Press*, 31st Jan. 1972.

¹²⁹ *Donegal Democrat*, 4th Dec. 1970; *Examiner*, 18th Jun. 1969.

¹³⁰ *Nenagh*, 12th Jul. 1969.

¹³¹ UCDA, FF, P176/950(14); UCDA, FF, P176/950(93).

¹³² UCDA, FF, P176/951; UCDA, FF, P176/950(34).

¹³³ UCDA, FF, P176/186(51).

¹³⁴ UCDA, FAP, P104/1993.

to a nationalist inheritance.¹³⁵ The labour movement did likewise. In 1969, at a concert marking the ITGWU band's golden jubilee, the band stated that its members had been arrested in Belfast in 1935 for playing the 'Soldier's Song'.¹³⁶ The Labour Party also continued to conclude its conferences by singing 'Watchword of Labour'.¹³⁷ Clearly, while mainstream parties in the Republic did not consider contemporary IRA violence part of a legitimate national narrative, in song they were still prepared to refer to the violence of previous generations.

Politics in the decades after Ireland became independent were characterised by consistent appeals on the part of different movements to the same nationalist cause in music. For the Blueshirts and Fine Gael, the inheritance of the Free State founders legitimised their agenda, for Fianna Fáil it was that of the anti-treaty IRA, while the labour movement stressed its links to Connolly. In all cases, nationalist associations were a necessary means of legitimising political objectives. In style, performance practice, commemorative ritual and, largely, in song selection, the practices of these various movements were strikingly uniform. Individual songs – 'The March of Youth', 'Legion of the Rearguard', 'Watchword of Labour' – made important distinctions, but the similarities demonstrate that this was a widespread political necessity rather than the agenda of one party. Writers and politicians deliberately integrated such music into a consistent historical narrative, coupled with a rhetoric that paid lip service to ending partition and achieving the Republic, even if none came close to any literal expression of the methods that songs advocated. Protests and eventually violence in Northern Ireland made such expressions more complex, but ultimately did little to discourage

¹³⁵ *Independent*, 21st May 1973.

¹³⁶ *Press*, 25th Sept. 1969.

¹³⁷ *Independent*, 28th Feb. 1972.

them, other than to cultivate a new body of nationalistic music that was off-limits for mainstream parties.

II

‘Folk music alone will not supply our needs’: Music and Cultural Nationalism

Radio encouraged the homogenisation and commercialisation of music across national boundaries. Irish soldiers in the British army returning from France brought jazz with them. Music hall gave way to dance hall and cinema.¹³⁸ Radio Luxembourg introduced popular music including, from the 1950s, rock 'n' roll. Beginning in America in the 1950s, critics of mass culture looked to what they perceived as more traditional music. Popular culture, for this new generation of folk revivalists, was ‘shallow, transient and commercially driven while folk music had depth, purity, and was produced authentically’. As sociologist Lee Marshall notes, this was at least partially delusional, as folk revivalists were themselves products of mass production, record companies, and radio.¹³⁹ The main proponents of the American revival included Pete Seeger and Joan Baez who relied on the notion that their music spoke to a longstanding tradition.¹⁴⁰ They performed older folksongs and established folk clubs and festivals to provide spaces where their music predominated over the popular.¹⁴¹ America’s most famous product was Bob Dylan, who started in New York folk clubs and bars and, more than any other, ‘made the image of a solo artist with a guitar and harmonica an indelible symbol of authenticity’.¹⁴² Performers, songwriters and collectors battled over what was truly authentic, and whether a song’s authenticity was located in its age, origin, style, or

¹³⁸ L. Gibbons, ‘Projecting the Nation: Cinema and Culture’ in J. Cleary and C. Connolly (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 210.

¹³⁹ L. Marshall, ‘Bob Dylan and the Academy’ in K. Dettmar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 105.

¹⁴⁰ D. Shumway, ‘Bob Dylan as Cultural Icon’ in K. Dettmar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 113.

¹⁴¹ A. Light, ‘Bob Dylan as Performer’ in K. Dettmar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 58; Gelbart, *Invention*, p. 272.

¹⁴² A. Decurtis, ‘Bob Dylan as Songwriter’ in K. Dettmar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 52.

ethos.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, the new ‘folk’ music became an appealing counter-culture for those dissatisfied with popular music.¹⁴⁴ In addition, it was identified with progressive, left-wing causes, including black civil rights and trade unionism.

As discussed in Chapter One, revivalists defined authentic Irish music as that derived from ‘ancient’ traditions, with morally conservative subject matter, played on the pipes, harp or fiddle (potentially on a pentatonic scale). Most importantly, songs were sung in Irish. The composers behind the Féis Ceoil provided a variation on this vision in that they sought a more prominent place for art music. These definitions were open to compromise, particularly where it boosted participation. The dilemma facing revivalists was how to maintain the momentum and relevance of their cause. The State was an obvious source of support and direction. Governments subsidised the Oireachtas (it was cancelled during the turbulent revolutionary period, but took place sporadically during the late 1920s and 1930s).¹⁴⁵ With the GAA, governments organised the ‘Tailteann Games’ in 1924, 1928 and 1932, primarily as an Irish equivalent to the Olympics, but which also promoted music.¹⁴⁶ In 1935, the government established the Folklore Commission to collect and preserve traditional songs and folklore.¹⁴⁷ It also funded a State record label, Gael Linn, to promote Irish music in 1953.¹⁴⁸ The Gaelic League, meanwhile, pressured Radio Éireann and RTÉ to include more Gaelic language programming.¹⁴⁹ Like the BBC in Britain, Radio Éireann often commissioned and

¹⁴³ Blacking, *Music*, pp. 154-155.

¹⁴⁴ Gelbart, *Invention*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ NAI, ‘An t-Oireachtas: general file’, PRES/P/1413; NAI, ‘An t-Oireachtas, 1943’, TSCH/97/9/366.

¹⁴⁶ *Press*, 5th Mar. 1959.

¹⁴⁷ A. Fleischmann, *Music in Ireland: A Symposium* (Cork, 1952), p. 308.

¹⁴⁸ NAI ‘Mise Éire and newsreel films by Gael Linn’, DFA/5/323/215.

¹⁴⁹ Savage, *Television*, p. 4.

broadcast original compositions, providing rare stimulation to art music.¹⁵⁰ It also had light and symphony orchestras.¹⁵¹ In 1923, the government created an army school of music and an army band, which played at State occasions. It was modelled on army bands that upheld ‘the prestige, culture and national pride of other countries’. The government employed a former German army bandmaster, Wilhelm Fritz Brase, to lead it.¹⁵² Amateur orchestras also operated in Dublin, Belfast and Cork, as well as various school choirs.¹⁵³ By the 1950s, there were still only a few university scholarships and two professorships in music (at UCD and University College Cork).¹⁵⁴ The annual Féis Ceoil alternated between Sligo and Dublin, but the consensus among Irish composers was that Ireland was ‘denied the same facilities for development as... other small democracies, such as Sweden and Finland’.¹⁵⁵ Aloys Fleischmann and Seán Ó Riada were foremost among the composers who emerged from this limited provision for art music. In 1951, a new organisation, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (Gathering of Musicians of Ireland), was founded specifically to promote traditional music, and expanded rapidly. By the 1960s, the most visible ‘Irish’ music was that of folk groups such as The Clancy Brothers and The Dubliners, inspired by American folk revivalists. So-called ‘Celtic Rock’ went even further. Edward O’Henry describes all these efforts, particularly those of Comhaltas, as having ‘their roots in Irish nationalism, especially in the vision of Éamon de Valera’.¹⁵⁶ Others reach similar conclusions about Seán Ó Riada and The Dubliners, but to do so is misleading.¹⁵⁷ While all engaged with a cultural

¹⁵⁰A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (Oxford, 2000), p. 60; Cunningham and Fleischmann, *Aloys Fleischmann*, p. 202.

¹⁵¹ Fleischmann, *Symposium*, pp. 46, 201, 281.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* p. 65.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 233.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 57.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 167, 211.

¹⁵⁶ O’Henry, ‘Institutions’, p. 69.

¹⁵⁷ Smyth, *Noisy*, p. 90; Pine, *Disappointed*, p. 429; McCarthy, ‘Music Education’, pp. 66-68.

nationalist ethos, the criteria by which authentic Irish music was defined were constantly interrogated and reimagined.

Publications defining authentic Irish music in the years immediately following independence largely perpetuated the criteria established by nineteenth-century revivalists. Educationalist and future Education Minister Timothy Corcoran reflected the primacy of the language when he wrote in 1923 that ‘the habituation of language command through song is the most effective and most attractive of all forms of education’.¹⁵⁸ In his *Handbook of Irish Music* (1928) Catholic priest Richard Henebry asserted that authentic Irish music should be played on a ‘gapped’ scale to counteract the ‘conditioning’ of diatonic scales, sung in Irish, and played on the fiddle or the pipes with a ‘wealth of ornamentation’. In schools, he argued, English-speaking girls had lost the singing ability that Irish provided. Thomas Moore typified a ‘descent in taste, with its significance for the condition of civilisation lying behind it’, while ‘English’ street ballads destroyed ‘natural human music’ in favour of ‘Western European music’. Irish music, he argued, was more authentic because it was more natural, an assertion he supported by comparing it to animal sounds.¹⁵⁹ These more extreme comparisons were not widespread, but his basic premise was representative and encouraged by politicians. The Republican newspaper, *An Phoblacht*, criticised John McCormack for failing to sing in Gaelic. If he did, the newspaper proclaimed optimistically, audiences would find that the ‘beauty of the air’ would ‘take their breath away... whether they understood the words or not’.¹⁶⁰ Speaking at the opening of a broadcasting station in 1933, de Valera stated that Irish music’s ‘pentatonic scale’ gave it a ‘singular beauty’ that made it ‘pre-

¹⁵⁸ T. Corcoran, ‘Music and Language in Irish Schools’, *The Irish Monthly* 51 (601) (Jul. 1923), p. 340.

¹⁵⁹ R. Henebry, *A Handbook of Irish Music* (Cork, 1928), pp. 23-57, 92, 171.

¹⁶⁰ *An Phoblacht* (henceforth *Phoblacht*), 31st Jul. 1925.

eminent amongst the music of the Celtic nations'.¹⁶¹ Commemorating the 95th anniversary of Thomas Moore's death, he called for 'a poet who could do in Irish what Moore did in English'.¹⁶² Like the Gaelic League, the Department for Education, responsible for the Irish language, saw music as a tool for language revival.¹⁶³ *The National Programme of Primary Instruction* made brief mention of scales, but none of learning instruments. Instead, it emphasised learning songs 'through the medium of the Irish language'.¹⁶⁴ Beyond that, teachers received no formal music training and there was no meaningful link with higher music education. It was also possible to get a degree in music 'without the slightest acquaintance with Gaelic music'.¹⁶⁵

Terence Brown has argued convincingly that the government's apparent responsibility for the language contributed, partly, to the Gaelic League's decline. The organisation survived, especially in Northern Ireland where there was no State support for the language, but in the Free State membership waned. The number of branches fell from a high of over 800 to 139 by 1924.¹⁶⁶ Its musical activities also faded. Although Rosamund Jacob continued to attend féiseanna, she observed a reduction in both attendance and quality.¹⁶⁷ Many féiseanna ceased altogether. When Gaelic League members attempted to revive the North Leitrim Féis in 1929 they were unsuccessful.¹⁶⁸ Reflecting on the success of the Tuam Féis in 1940, organisers commented that it was 'all the more gratifying in view of the failure of féiseanna elsewhere'.¹⁶⁹ Large events

¹⁶¹ M. Moynihan (ed.), *Speeches and Statements by Éamon de Valera* (Dublin, 1980), p. 233.

¹⁶² *Examiner*, 26th Feb. 1947.

¹⁶³ Lee, *Ireland*, p. 132.

¹⁶⁴ *The National Programme of Primary Instruction* (Dublin, 1922), p. 4.

¹⁶⁵ Fleischmann, *Symposium*, p. 19.

¹⁶⁶ T. Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* (London, 2004), pp. 43-44.

¹⁶⁷ NLI, RJD, 5th Mar. 1937, MS 32,582/81; NLI, RJD, 16th Mar. 1941, MS 32,582/95.

¹⁶⁸ *Leitrim* 9th Mar. 1929.

¹⁶⁹ *Tuam*, 28th Sept. 1940.

with a competitive element or access to commercial or State support performed better. The Tailteann Games had a large opening ceremony with pipe bands and 300 school choirs singing ‘national songs’ alongside pieces by Irish composers, including a ‘Gaelic Opera’.¹⁷⁰ The Games included competitions for singing, harp, and pipes, but ceased after 1932 because of inadequate funds (their government grant required that organisers raise a certain amount themselves).¹⁷¹ The Oireachtas also benefitted from its scale and competitions. In 1939, it included pipe bands, concerts, and competitions in composition and performance.¹⁷² ‘Céilidhe bands’, in contrast, emerged without State assistance. These small groups of musicians played dance music with an Irish character, conveyed through a blend of ‘Irish’ instruments (fiddle, accordion). As their regular concerts and radio appearances suggest, the smaller groups were more suitable for dance halls and broadcasting studios, and quickly grew in popularity.¹⁷³ Céilidhe bands emerged in the mid-1920s (they were first mentioned in newspapers in 1926), and peaked in the late 1930s.¹⁷⁴

Commercial methods, new technology, and the patronage of broadcasters was as important for the various strands of musical revival as State support, if not more so. Collectors from the Folklore Commission recorded singers on gramophones, and collaborated with Radio Éireann on research.¹⁷⁵ Several small record labels, moreover, specialised in Irish traditional music (e.g. ‘Gaelic and Celtic’).¹⁷⁶ The effort with which

¹⁷⁰ NAI, ‘Tailteann Games’, TSCH/3/S1592.

¹⁷¹ GAAA, Tailteann Games Committee Minute Books, 23rd Feb. 1922, TG/01; *Press*, 2nd Jul. 1936.

¹⁷² NAI, ‘Music and Dancing. Request from abroad for Irish Music published and recorded’, DFA/5/338/381; NAI, PRES/P/1413.

¹⁷³ E.g. *Evening*, 6th Jun. 1933.

¹⁷⁴ *Evening*, 4th Sept. 1926. The Irish Newspaper Archive records 1419 mentions of Céilidhe bands in 1938.

¹⁷⁵ *Treoir* Mar./Apr. 1971, p. 6; NLI, Sean O’Casey Papers, MS 37,938.

¹⁷⁶ Morash, *Media*, p. 151.

advocates of particular genres pursued airtime illustrates radio's particular importance. Robert Brennan became Radio Éireann director in 1947 and 'was told that there was too much classical music, there was too much céilidhe music, there was too much Irish, there wasn't enough Irish, there should be more traditional music, there was not enough variety and so on'.¹⁷⁷ Radio Éireann broadcast two céilidhe band programmes per week in the early 1950s.¹⁷⁸ While the station insisted, in 1955, that it would not play traditional music simply for 'patriotic reasons', its audience research also suggested that listeners followed such programmes (albeit in the English language) 'avidly'.¹⁷⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that the BBC in Northern Ireland also broadcast traditional music, including céilidhe bands, féiseanna, and children's choirs singing 'Irish folksongs'.¹⁸⁰ Like Radio Éireann, it collaborated with the Folklore Commission for these programmes.¹⁸¹ During the Second World War, the BBC began an 'Irish Half Hour' with Irish songs and performers, aiming to attract support from the Republic for the war effort.¹⁸² These broadcasts scored above average on the BBC's audience appreciation scale.¹⁸³ This suggests that, while traditional music infrastructure declined in tandem with the Gaelic League, there was still an audience for traditional music if and when it was promoted through accessible channels.

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann emerged in 1951 against this background. Comhaltas was founded by members of the Dublin Pipers Club (formed in 1900 by members of the

¹⁷⁷ NLI, Robert Brennan Papers, MS 49,686/32.

¹⁷⁸ Fleischmann, *Symposium*, p. 202.

¹⁷⁹ *Radio Éireann*, pp. 6, 27.

¹⁸⁰ BBCWAC, 'Dungannon Céilidhe Band 1939', NI3/213/1; BBCWAC, 'Newry Céilidhe Band 1938', NI3/358/1; BBCWAC, 'Londonderry Féis 1934', NI3/198/1; BBCWAC, 'Country Schoolmaster 1948', NI4/53/1.

¹⁸¹ BBCWAC, 'Folk Lore File 1 1951', NI4/389/1.

¹⁸² BBCWAC, 'Irish Half Hour File 2', NI4/106/2.

¹⁸³ BBCWAC, 'Prizewinners Concert 1949-1954', NI4/176/1.

Gaelic League).¹⁸⁴ It had 34 branches by 1955, and over 400 globally by 1985.¹⁸⁵ It was arranged into a central committee, provincial councils, county boards and local branches.¹⁸⁶ Absorbing existing traditional music clubs accelerated its expansion. One of these, Cumann an Phiarsaigh in Tipperary, was founded by Labhrás Ó Murchú (b. 1939). Ó Murchú became Secretary for the Tipperary Comhaltas county board in 1960 and then Comhaltas Director General in 1968; he also edited its magazine, *Treoir*.¹⁸⁷ At various times, Comhaltas attracted funding from the tourist board, arts council and Department of the Gaeltacht (responsible for Gaelic-speaking communities). Ó Murchú, especially, sought funding for a permanent building in Dublin against government advice which, while successful, placed considerable stress on the organisation's finances and its relationship with State funding bodies.¹⁸⁸

The Comhaltas conception of Irish music built upon and reimagined cultural nationalist criteria. Like the Gaelic League, Comhaltas made the harp and the pipes the primary instruments of an Irish timbre.¹⁸⁹ The Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Festival of Music) – a national festival and its largest annual event – also included competitions for fiddle, tin whistle and flute.¹⁹⁰ One writer in *Ceol*, a Comhaltas journal, insisted that native Irish speakers were, thanks to the language, naturally more talented.¹⁹¹ According to *Treoir*, traditional (sean-nós) singing was characterised by ornamentation.¹⁹² These criteria perpetuated those promoted by the Gaelic League, but Comhaltas also updated these

¹⁸⁴ *An Aisling* 1 (1986), p. 213; F. Valley and L. Doherty, *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music* (Cork, 1999), p. 111.

¹⁸⁵ *Ireland in Musical Mood '85* (Dublin, 1985), p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ *Treoir*, Sept./Oct. 1970.

¹⁸⁷ Valley and Doherty, *Companion*, p. 284.

¹⁸⁸ NAI, 'Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: financial situation', TSCH/2011/127/409.

¹⁸⁹ *Bunreacht* (Dublin, 1951), p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ *Anglo-Celt*, 2nd Jun. 1952.

¹⁹¹ *Ceol* (Autumn, 1963), p. 24.

¹⁹² *Treoir* (Mar./Apr. 1973), p. 21.

definitions for modern circumstances. Fianna Fáil's P. J. Little, speaking at the Fleadh Cheoil in 1952, called for Comhaltas to 'infiltrate into cinemas and dance halls'. At the same event, Sean O Baigeall, Professor at St Patrick's College, said that he disliked the label of the 'ancient music of Ireland':

Our young people should be told this much about the Irish music that we are offering them – that it is modern, that it is alive, that it is in consonance with all the national traditions and aspirations and that it can be developed by them and only by them.¹⁹³

This was a departure from the language of preservation. To an extent, Comhaltas also interrogated the primacy of language. Caitlin Moynaghan commented:

The Gaelic League has done much for the language... the G.A.A. had put their games before the world... Now Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann were setting themselves the task of bringing Irish music back to the everyday life of the people.¹⁹⁴

Comhaltas thus constructed its activities explicitly around music, not only as an adjunct to the language movement. In both the 1951 and 1967 editions of its *Bunreacht* (constitution), Comhaltas stated that the Irish language version of the rules took precedent over the English in the event of any dispute (none has ever arisen). The 1967 edition, however, omitted a clause stating that Comhaltas should 'co-operate with all bodies working for the restoration of Irish culture', while adding another specifying that its funds 'be devoted solely to the production of Irish traditional music'.¹⁹⁵ Both changes suggest a reaffirmation of the focus on music over other causes.

¹⁹³ *Anglo-Celt*, 2nd Jun. 1952.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Bunreacht* (1951), pp. 3-5; *Bunreacht* (Dublin, 1967), pp. 5, 9.

A Comhaltas statement in 1955 boasted its ‘natural cultural integrity’ in contradistinction to ‘unchristian’ commercial cultures in an ‘era of films, radio and jukeboxes’.¹⁹⁶ Although it rejected modern popular culture’s values, Comhaltas did engage with modern marketing methods which, combined with its proficient organisation, explains its success. One of Comhaltas’ stated goals was to establish branches throughout the country, while it held the Fleadh Cheoil at different venues each year, host branches keeping a share of the profits (which were substantial; Ó Murchú even described the event as a ‘commercial’ one).¹⁹⁷ This raised the organisation’s profile across Ireland, generating interest and press coverage. The *Anglo-Celt* devoted several pages to the first Fleadh Cheoil in Monaghan.¹⁹⁸ Like Gaelic League féiseanna, Comhaltas held regional Fleadhanna, which spurred the organisation of new branches. Musicians in Kerry established a Comhaltas branch in 1959, and arranged their first Fleadh months later.¹⁹⁹ Competitions attracted and encouraged musicians keen to demonstrate their abilities and win prizes to the extent that *Treoir* described an ‘air of tension’ that accompanied them.²⁰⁰ Comhaltas also produced instruction booklets for Irish instruments and gramophone records, further illustrating how the organisation used commercial apparatus to promote traditional music.²⁰¹ Part of its appeal to musicians was the opportunity to make money. At the inaugural Fleadh Cheoil in 1952, Dr. B. Galligan stated that Comhaltas would remedy the situation whereby ‘the fees paid by Radio Éireann... were hardly sufficient to defray the musician’s expenses’.²⁰² *Treoir* was part of this process also; its articles were almost

¹⁹⁶ NAI, DFA/5/338/381.

¹⁹⁷ Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, *Bunreacht* (Dublin, 1951), pp. 3, 23, 25; *Treoir* (Sept./Oct. 1970), p. 3.

¹⁹⁸ *Anglo-Celt*, 7th Jan. 1952.

¹⁹⁹ *Aisling*, p. 60.

²⁰⁰ *Treoir* (Nov./Dec. 1972), p. 4; *Treoir* (Jul./Aug. 1972), p. 18.

²⁰¹ NAI DFA/5/338/381.

²⁰² *Anglo-Celt*, 7th Jun. 1952.

exclusively in English, maximising its readership. The magazine started in 1968, and the first issue had a circulation of 600; by 1970 it was 5,000.²⁰³ Comhaltas thus maximised its market through commercial marketing, new technology, and a wide geographic reach.

Comhaltas was particularly aggressive towards broadcasters. In 1970, *Treoir* attacked RTÉ for failing to provide ‘reasonable time for undiluted native Irish music’. These criticisms, as demonstrated above, were not entirely fair, but they encouraged a sense that RTÉ had a responsibility to promote Comhaltas. These efforts appear to have been vindicated, as Comhaltas programming featured on radio and television, even if Comhaltas represented such efforts as inadequate.²⁰⁴ Comhaltas also paid for additional RTÉ programming to increase its exposure.²⁰⁵ In 1966, moreover, the BBC produced a special programme about the Fleadh Cheoil.²⁰⁶ A *Treoir* editorial in 1971 explained the enthusiasm for broadcasting:

There are those who would suggest that Comhaltas should limit itself; that it should confine itself to organising local activities and not be concerned with say, television... the number who hold such views is fast decreasing, as we come to realise that if our endeavours are to bear fruit we must have an environment that is conducive to our work’.²⁰⁷

While its cause was traditional, therefore, the success of Comhaltas lay in its modern methods of organisation and self-promotion.

²⁰³ *Treoir* (Sept./Oct. 1970), p. 3.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 6.

²⁰⁵ *Treoir* (Mar./Apr. 1971), p. 17.

²⁰⁶ BBCWAC, ‘Fleadh 1966’, NI4/386/1.

²⁰⁷ *Treoir* (Sept./Oct. 1971), p. 2.

Comhaltas was not intertwined with political movements as the Gaelic League had been, but nor was it neutral on national questions. The Ulster provincial organisation operated on a nine-county basis. Based on the frequency with which newspapers reported their meetings, border county branches in the Republic were more active than those in Northern Ireland.²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Northern Irish branches operated, and Comhaltas described their growth as ‘gratifying’.²⁰⁹ They had Protestant members, and thus claimed to be non-sectarian.²¹⁰ However, Comhaltas had nationalist political inclinations. Ó Murchú spoke regularly on the need to commemorate nationalist history, particularly Pádraic Pearse, of whom he said that to forget his ‘legacy to the nation’ as part of a ‘revisionist, clinical time warp’ was ‘unworthy of our nation’.²¹¹ Notably, after internment was introduced in Northern Ireland, the Comhaltas central committee cancelled the 1971 Fleadh Cheoil in ‘solidarity with our fellow Irishmen in the six occupied counties’. In an explicit use of nationalistic language, they condemned ‘the brutality by a foreign army against our fellow Irishmen’.²¹² Some branches criticised the decision, calling it ‘sectarian’ and holding their own street sessions instead.²¹³ The central committee, however, was unanimous, including Ó Murchú, whom the Irish government believed was particularly sympathetic to Republicanism. ‘As far as the Garda Síochána [police] are concerned’, stated a government report, ‘Mr Ó Murchú is a member of the Provisional I.R.A.’. The government cited these suspicions among its reasons for refusing to provide additional funding for Comhaltas.²¹⁴ Ó Murchú was arrested by British police in 1977 but never charged.²¹⁵ Whether or not Ó Murchú had

²⁰⁸ *Anglo-Celt*, 9th May 1964; *Anglo-Celt*, 29th Aug. 1964.

²⁰⁹ *Anglo-Celt*, 14th Mar. 1953; *Anglo-Celt*, 29th Aug. 1964; *Ulster*, 25th Apr. 1959.

²¹⁰ *Treoir* (May/Jun. 1972), p. 18.

²¹¹ *Aisling*, p. 169.

²¹² *Treoir* (Sept./Oct. 1971), p. 16.

²¹³ M. Hughes, ‘We are all Irishmen: Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Dilemma of Identity’ (MSc Thesis, Queen’s University Belfast, 1990), pp. 60-61.

²¹⁴ NAI, ‘Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: financial situation’, TSCH/2011/127/410.

²¹⁵ *Press*, 5th Apr. 1977.

IRA connections, Comhaltas and its director used explicitly Republican language regarding Northern Ireland, a sympathetic attitude that potentially damaged their position.

Even more so than Comhaltas, the 1950s and 1960s ‘ballad boom’ provided a new, commercial interpretation of traditional music, inspired by the transnational folk revival. Its first high-profile proponents were The Clancy Brothers. Tom and Liam Clancy and Tommy Makem formed the band in New York. They began playing Irish ballads accompanied by banjos and guitars and found a following in New York’s folk scene (Pete Seeger played banjo on one of their records).²¹⁶ It is also claimed that Bob Dylan enjoyed the band’s version of ‘The Patriot Game’; its author (Dominic Behan) later accused Dylan of plagiarising him.²¹⁷ The Clancy Brothers inspired imitators in Ireland, notably The Dubliners, formed by Ronnie Drew, Luke Kelly, Ciaran Bourke and Barney McKenna in 1962 in O’Donoghue’s bar, Dublin.²¹⁸ Pubs and folk clubs (not unlike those in America) provided spaces for the ballad boom’s development. Liam Weldon, another ballad singer, ran the Pavees Club in Dublin.²¹⁹ The members of a more controversial group, The Wolfe Tones (named for the leading United Irishman), had working-class Dublin backgrounds. Lead singer and banjoist Brian Warfield joined Comhaltas in 1960 and attended the Fleadh Cheoil before moving to London, where he played in folk clubs. He returned to Ireland in 1964 and formed The Wolfe Tones with his brother Derek, Noel Nagle and Tommy Byrne, whom he met at a Fleadh in

²¹⁶ Valley and Doherty, *Companion*, p. 71; The Clancy Brothers and T. Makem, *A Spontaneous Performance* (1961).

²¹⁷ Decurtis, ‘Songwriter’, p. 46.

²¹⁸ The Dubliners, *30 Years a-Graying: Official Biography & Tour Brochure* (London, 1992), p. 2.

²¹⁹ C. Moore, *One Voice* (London, 2000), pp. 18, 25, 125, 234.

Roscommon.²²⁰ The majority of ballad artists were male, but a small number of women also carved out a space in the revival, for instance Anne Byrne. Byrne's uncle recorded Irish ballads in America and she won prizes for singing at Dublin féiseanna, which led to her performing on television.²²¹

The politics of these artists was, like American equivalents, left-wing. In 1972, The Dubliners recorded a song commemorating the 1958 Springhill Mining Disaster in Canada which killed seventy-five miners.²²² In 'The Button Pusher', they satirised the nuclear arms race ('when the atom war is over, and the world is split in three/A consolation I've got, well maybe it's not, there'll be nobody left but me').²²³ Most ballad artists were also undoubtedly nationalist. Several active dissidents wrote ballads inspired by the IRA Border Campaign (1956-1963), for instance 'Sean South of Garryowen' and 'The Auld Triangle' (analysed in Chapter Four). Ballad groups covered these songs, such as The Dubliners' recording of 'The Auld Triangle'.²²⁴ They also recorded older ballads. An early Clancy Brothers album, *The Rising of the Moon*, consisted almost exclusively of nationalist ballads, including 'Kevin Barry'.²²⁵ Anne Byrne's second album included Thomas Moore's 'The Croppy Boy'.²²⁶ Liam Weldon's 'Dark Horse on the Wind' condemns mainstream Irish politicians as 'charlatans' who 'wear dead men's shoes/And rattle dead men's bones', despite having themselves 'sold the very stones'.²²⁷ The haunting, lone voice, unaccompanied, conveys a damning critique of politicians who appropriate but ultimately betray their nationalist heritage.

²²⁰ 'The Wolfe Tones' www.wolfetonesofficialsite.com (14th Mar. 2015).

²²¹ 'Anne Byrne – Folksinger' <http://annebyrne.com/> (20th Mar. 2017).

²²² The Dubliners, 'The Springhill Disaster', *Double Dubliners* (1972).

²²³ The Dubliners, 'The Button Pusher', *Revolution* (1970).

²²⁴ The Dubliners, 'The Auld Triangle', *More of the Hard Stuff* (1967).

²²⁵ The Clancy Brothers and T. Makem, 'Kevin Barry', *The Rising of the Moon* (1959).

²²⁶ A. Byrne, 'The Croppy Boy', *I Chose the Green* (1968).

²²⁷ L. Weldon, *Dark Horse on the Wind* (1976).

The response of ballad groups to British actions in Northern Ireland was similarly condemnatory. The Dubliners recorded a lament on Bloody Sunday, ‘The Town I Loved so Well’, written by former Derry resident Phil Coulter. Unlike their usual uplifting, communally rendered refrains, ‘The Town I Loved so Well’ features a slow tempo and lone vocalist with a downplayed guitar and violin accompaniment, mourning Bloody Sunday and a town (Derry) ‘brought to its knees/by the armoured cars and the bombed out bars’. It particularly criticises the army ‘with their tanks and their guns’, asking hopelessly ‘oh my, what have they done?’.²²⁸ ‘Free the People’ demonstrates the influence of civil rights protest song, including a quotation from the American protest anthem ‘We Shall Overcome’. The C major key is salient with the song’s bold and uplifting intentions, while a plagal cadence in the chorus is consistent with the hymn-like quality of civil rights songs.²²⁹

The Wolfe Tones were more explicitly Republican. Brian Warfield hoped to ‘encourage other groups and writers to pursue the same social reforms as American singers like Joan Baez and Pete Seeger’, but his songs more often expressed sympathy with the IRA, not least ‘Rifles of the IRA’.²³⁰ In 1973, three IRA inmates escaped from Mountjoy Jail via helicopter. The Wolfe Tones released ‘Up and Away (The Helicopter Song)’ in celebration:

And it’s up like a bird and high over the city
 “Three men are missing” I heard the warder cry
 “Sure it must have been a bird that flew into the prison
 Or one of those Ministers” said the warder in the ‘joy.

²²⁸ The Dubliners, ‘The Town I Loved so Well’, *Plain and Simple* (1973).

²²⁹ The Dubliners, ‘Free the People’, *Double Dubliners* (1972); P. Seeger, ‘We Shall Overcome’, *Broadsides – Songs and Ballads* (1964).

²³⁰ *Sligo*, 7th Jul. 1967; *Anglo-Celt*, 8th Jul. 1969.

The song uses just three chords in G Major, maintaining the simple, memorable structure that made their songs popular and suitable for communal performance. That simplicity also conveys a patronising tone, ridiculing the hapless guards.²³¹ Their press reception suggests that newspapers did not necessarily take the group seriously. One review described their audiences as showing no ‘aggression or emotion. The faces are relaxed and calm’.²³² Nevertheless, The Wolfe Tones demonstrate that ballad groups were willing and able to romanticise violent organisations. Their management generated press coverage by claiming that RTÉ had ‘banned’ the group’s music, but RTÉ never confirmed that it had and does not appear to have done so. Indeed, even as the band’s manager claimed that it had, his evidence was that RTÉ ‘only’ played ‘Up and Away’ three times.²³³ However, the controversy gave the record publicity, indicating the existence of an interest in music that audiences considered oppositional or controversial.

Politics does not itself explain the success of ballad groups. They also benefitted from accessible performance spaces, namely pubs and folk clubs. Several folk clubs operated in Dublin, often sporting names denoting nationalist history, for instance the Emmet Folk Club and the Parnell Folk Club.²³⁴ The typical group, according to *Ceol*, sang ‘ban-the-bomb songs’ in pubs.²³⁵ At a pub ‘ballad session’, wrote Georges-Denis Zimmerman in 1976, the average Irish audience member knew ‘what to expect: familiar songs, something to drink and a cheerful atmosphere’.²³⁶ The American revival influenced these settings considerably. The Dubliners and Wolfe Tones appeared with

²³¹ The Wolfe Tones, *Up and Away (The Helicopter Song)* (1973).

²³² *Sunday*, 18th Apr. 1982.

²³³ *Press*, 2nd Nov. 1973; *Donegal*, 8th Dec. 1973.

²³⁴ Valley and Doherty, *Companion*, p. 20.

²³⁵ ‘As we see it’, *Ceol: A Journal of Irish Music* 1 (2) (Autumn, 1963), p. 31.

²³⁶ G. Zimmermann, ‘What is an Irish Ballad?’, *Irish Folk Music Studies* 3 (1976), p. 8.

minimal stage settings, often sat down, with an emphasis on audience participation and call-and-response singing.²³⁷ Banjos and acoustic guitars were not previously associated with Irish music, but ballad groups now utilised them heavily.²³⁸ These innovations divided those in Comhaltas. In *Ceol* in 1963, one writer described ‘informal sessions in a public house’ during the Fleadh Cheoil as having made him ‘realise the futility of our quest for an indigenous folksong’.²³⁹ In a subsequent issue, a correspondent expressed the opposite opinion: ‘now with the “folk boom” folk tunes are being used by commercial performers. There is no real harm in this. Commercial music can only be better for the infusion of real stuff’.²⁴⁰ Most responses followed the line of the latter. That groups successfully associated guitars and banjos with ‘authentic’ Irish music, despite their recent introduction, is reflected in reports describing The Wolfe Tones as purveyors of ‘traditional folk music’.²⁴¹ Reviews highlighted their perceived authenticity (audience participation, ‘minimum’ stage settings) and that of their ‘traditional’ timbre.²⁴² Of The Clancy Brothers, one reviewer wrote that in ‘an age which breeds such oddments as The Beatles, it is at least heartening to see that a group of young men with some rollicking ballads can pack in the patrons’.²⁴³ These reviewers interpreted the ballad boom positively, in contrast to popular music’s apparent commercialisation and detachment.

²³⁷ The Wolfe Tones My Heart is in Ireland, Cork 1986 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq2Dc73-xm0l> (22nd Jun. 2015); Luke Kelly & Dubliners – Monto RTÉ TV The Talk Show 1970 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bv4nQFKcDts> (20th Mar. 2017).

²³⁸ The Dubliners, *The Dubliners* (1964).

²³⁹ *Ceol: A Journal of Irish Music* 1 (1) (1963), p. 32.

²⁴⁰ *Ceol: A Journal of Irish Music* 1 (3) (1963), p. 27.

²⁴¹ *Leitrim*, 28th Oct. 1967.

²⁴² *Independent*, 21st Jul. 1964; *Sunday*, 12th May 1963.

²⁴³ *Examiner*, 3rd Jan. 1964.

While they rejected popular music's commercial values, electronic sound and elaborate, detached performances, the successful ballad groups were those that used commercial methods. They relied on electronic amplification and recording to disseminate their music. The Clancy Brothers and The Dubliners performed on radio and television, including RTÉ and the BBC.²⁴⁴ The Dubliners recorded for the BBC four times in 1968, negotiating higher fees in the process.²⁴⁵ The same year, The Clancy Brothers received £1,043 for an exclusive BBC broadcast.²⁴⁶ These appearances raised their profile. The Dubliners were steeped in the language of celebrity (newspapers called them 'famous TV stars').²⁴⁷ This and the ballad boom's overwhelming male dominance, reinforced by the 'phallic symbols' of the microphone and guitar, are revealing of the extent to which it conformed to popular rock conventions.²⁴⁸ Laurence Grossberg writes that the 'ideology of authenticity' differentiated rock from other forms of commercial music even as it used similar promotional methods.²⁴⁹ In this sense, Irish folk revival was another 'authentic' ideology within commercial musical structures.

'Celtic Rock' went further; Horslips (Jim Lockhart, Eamon Carr, Charles O'Connor, Barry Devlin and Johnny Fean) were synonymous with the genre. Devlin described as 'idyllic' his rural upbringing, and the band's music included Gaelic songs and folk tunes such as 'Brian Boru's March'. However, by fusing this music not only with the methods but the sound of rock 'n' roll, they represented a new interpretation of Irish traditions.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁴ *Evening*, 24th May 1968.

²⁴⁵ BBCWAC, 'The Dubliners (1968-1982)', RCONT16.

²⁴⁶ BBCWAC, 'The Clancy Brothers (1963-1970)', TVART4.

²⁴⁷ *Press*, 7th Sept. 1964; *Sligo*, 4th Sept. 1964; *Limerick*, 19th Oct. 1964.

²⁴⁸ Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously*, pp. 43-44.

²⁴⁹ Quoted in K. Dettmar and W. Richey 'Introduction' in K. Dettmar and W. Richey (eds.), *Reading Rock and Roll: Authenticity, Appropriation, Aesthetics* (New York, 1999), p. 8.

²⁵⁰ M Cunningham, *Horslips: Tall Tales, The Official Biography* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 9, 13, 150; Horslips, 'Do'n Oiche Ud I mBeithil', *Drive the Cold Winter Away* (1976); Horslips, 'Trouble (with a capital T)', *The Book of Invasions: A Celtic Symphony* (1976).

Their music included flutes and tin whistles, but their primary timbre was that of electric guitars, drums and keyboards.²⁵¹ Despite his father being an accordionist, Carr preferred the drums, while O'Connor professed to have only 'a vague interest in Irish music'.²⁵² Instead, the band list The Beatles and Radio Luxembourg among their influences.²⁵³ Like ballad groups, Horslips were commercially aware, with experience of working in advertising, and their intention was to become 'an international touring act' who were not 'restricted by a purely Irish band character'.²⁵⁴ Horslips created new performance contexts for Irish music, epitomised in their eccentric costumes from the same shop that spawned the Sex Pistols.²⁵⁵ They also interrogated traditional music's conservative morality. They advertised a concert in October 1970 as a 'funky céilidhe'. Posters depicted an open, red-lipped mouth out of which a phallic cigarette hung suggestively, reminiscent of the lip and tongue logo of the Rolling Stones.²⁵⁶ Jim Lockhart believed that they had made traditional music relevant to 'the young person on the street in 1972 or '73 who was listening to Deep Purple, Yes or T-Rex'.²⁵⁷ Similarly, rock band Thin Lizzy recorded a version of the folksong 'Whiskey in the Jar' (1972), expressing singer Phil Lynott's Irish heritage, but in a modern, reimagined rock setting.²⁵⁸

Art music did not have the advantage of commercial demand, nor the organisational sophistication of Comhaltas, but a small number of composers with State support or

²⁵¹ Horslips, *The Book of Invasions*.

²⁵² Cunningham, *Horslips*, pp. 23, 27.

²⁵³ *Ibid.* pp. 13, 27-28, 101.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 42, 63.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 68.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 48.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 20, 82.

²⁵⁸ Thin Lizzy, *Whiskey in the Jar* (1972).

innovative methods developed their own reimagined cultural nationalism. The annual Féis Ceoil, unlike the Fleadh Cheoil, did not tour nationally, instead alternating between Dublin and Sligo. Nor did it have a branch system as did Comhaltas. This limited its reach. Competition entries peaked in 1945, but fell each subsequent year. Financially, the festival made substantial losses.²⁵⁹ Like Comhaltas, the musicians behind the Féis Ceoil sought to assert their position in a nation-building project through a permanent building, the lack of which composer Frederick May felt inhibited musical output.²⁶⁰ A long, unfruitful campaign to secure funding for a National Concert Hall in Dublin, however, did little to encourage grassroots participation.²⁶¹

The existing musical infrastructure in Cork, particularly around the university, combined with Aloys Fleischmann's organisational and compositional work, made a more notable impact on Irish soundscapes. Fleischmann's German father, an organist who taught at the Cork School of Music, worked with many composers involved in the cultural revival and Féis Ceoil during the early twentieth century, notably Arnold Bax, Annie Patterson and Carl Hardebeck, as well as political figures including Terence MacSwiney.²⁶² Fleischmann studied under Patterson at University College Cork (UCC) and then composer Joseph Haus in Germany. Like nineteenth-century cultural revivalists and contemporary ballad groups, Fleischmann benefitted from transnational stimuli. Haus was enthusiastic about folk music, and encouraged Fleischmann to pursue his Irish interests (his compositions while in Germany used Irish language texts).

Fleischmann returned to Cork in 1934, began teaching at UCC, and formed a University

²⁵⁹ Fleischmann, *Symposium*, p. 214; *Press*, 8th May 1952; *Press*, 25th Jul. 1957.

²⁶⁰ Fleischmann, *Symposium*, p. 165.

²⁶¹ *Press*, 11th Apr. 1957; B. Kennedy, *Dreams and Responsibilities: The State and the Arts in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 38-43, 76.

²⁶² De Barra, *Fleischmann*, pp. 10, 73.

orchestra, increasing the number of music students in the process.²⁶³ In 1954, he established the Cork International Choral and Dance Festival, including a seminar on contemporary choral music from 1962.²⁶⁴

Like the composers who established the Féis Ceoil, Fleischmann sought to combine traditional music and art music, but he criticised his predecessors' diluted efforts. Composers like Stanford, he wrote, 'were assiduous and dutiful disciples of the nineteenth-century German tradition even whilst clothing their melodies in all too conventional dress'. Irish folksongs survived 'even against the rise of the English ballad', but 'folk music alone will not supply our needs'.²⁶⁵ He criticised Henebry's simplistic views, stating that sophisticated Irish music required more than an 'imitation' of folk traditions.²⁶⁶ His compositions combined older tunes with an art music format, for instance 'Trí hAmhráin', a song-cycle for piano and voice incorporating the eighteenth-century harp tune 'Lament for Owen Roe O'Neill'.²⁶⁷ Ireland's nationalist commemorative culture stimulated his efforts. In 1945, the government commissioned a composition from Fleischmann for the centenary of Thomas Davis's death, performed by the Radio Éireann orchestra. Fleischmann composed a setting of Davis's 'Clare's Dragoons', combining orchestra and choir with the pipes to create a hybrid of art music and Irish tradition. Its opening suggests a gradually approaching enemy army through the roll of a bass drum. Then the choir sings, drowning out the army, before voice and orchestra go suddenly silent and the pipes play, conveying a militaristic, defiant quality. Davis's lyrics then describe the battle between 'Clare's Dragoons' and 'the English

²⁶³ De Barra, *Fleischmann*, pp. 16-32, 39-42.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 113.

²⁶⁵ Fleischmann, *Symposium*, pp. iii, 4; De Barra, *Fleischmann*, p. 53.

²⁶⁶ De Barra, *Fleischmann*, p. 55.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 58-61.

crew'.²⁶⁸ Fleischmann's experiences demonstrate that, with State support and appropriate infrastructure, art musicians could convey their own interpretation of cultural nationalism.

The cultural world in Cork that Fleischmann encouraged produced Seán Ó Riada, perhaps the most prominent composer who attempted to cultivate distinctive Irish art music. Ó Riada was born in 1931; his mother was a musician, and he learned to play violin and piano.²⁶⁹ From 1948, he studied composition under Fleischmann at UCC.²⁷⁰ He later worked for RTÉ and the Abbey Theatre and took an active interest in Gaelic culture.²⁷¹ He spent the summer of 1959 in the Gaeltacht in Co. Kerry, and in 1960 attended the Comhaltas annual convention.²⁷² Ó Riada came to national attention when he composed soundtracks for documentary films on the revolutionary period: *Mise Éire* (1959), *Saoirse?* (1961) and *An Tine Bheo* (1966).²⁷³ He also gave a series of broadcasts, *Our Musical Heritage*, later published as a book.²⁷⁴ In these broadcasts, Ó Riada rejected out of hand 'gapped scales' as a necessary part of authentic Irish music.²⁷⁵ In his compositions, like Fleischmann, he combined folksong and art music, for instance quoting Beethoven and Mozart.²⁷⁶ He employed the timbre of Irish instruments, including the pipes, flute, fiddle, and harp, although he believed that in

²⁶⁸ De Barra, *Fleischmann*, pp. 84-87.

²⁶⁹ Valley and Doherty, *Companion*, pp. 288-289.

²⁷⁰ 'Aloys Fleischmann to Miss Quinn, 29th Sept. 1982', Joan Denise Moriarty and Aloys Fleischmann Papers (henceforth JDMAF), 'Ó Riada Collaborations'.

²⁷¹ Valley and Doherty, *Companion*, pp. 288-289.

²⁷² *Treoir* (Jul./Aug. 1972).

²⁷³ L. Marcus, 'Seán Ó Riada and the Ireland of the Sixties' in B. Harris and G. Freyer (eds.), *Integrating Tradition: The Achievement of Seán Ó Riada* (Sligo, 1981), pp. 18, 22.

²⁷⁴ S. Ó Riada, *Our Musical Heritage* (Portlaoise, 1982).

²⁷⁵ G. Victory, 'Ó Riada on Radio', in B. Harris and G. Freyer (eds.), *Integrating Tradition: The Achievement of Seán Ó Riada* (Sligo, 1981), pp. 53, 61.

²⁷⁶ Riada, *Musical*, pp. 19-21; Marcus, 'Seán', p. 25.

order to replicate the sound of a traditional harp it was necessary to use a harpsichord.²⁷⁷ He rejected the accordion, then growing in popularity among traditional musicians, and the piano which he stated was ‘an excellent instrument... for playing serious European music, but it is not suitable for Irish music’.²⁷⁸ His rejection of the accordion derived from his central criterion of Irish music: variation. Ó Riada argued that Irish music, particularly sean-nós singing, should be heavily ornamented in the form of variations upon a repeated ‘basic structure’, either in rhythm or dynamics, an indication of the singer’s talents.²⁷⁹ The accordion’s inability to perform such variations meant it was not Irish.²⁸⁰

Ó Riada’s compositions used ornamentation frequently.²⁸¹ He argued that céilidhe bands who blended their instruments produced ‘meaningless noise’. Instead, an Irish band, following the principle of variation, used ornamented solo instruments around a ‘basic skeleton’.²⁸² He formed a group, Ceoltóirí Chualann, in 1960 and played the harpsichord, consistent with his conception of an Irish timbre. Their songs began simply, gradually adding notes and ornamentation with each solo.²⁸³ Its members were products of the reinvigorated traditional musical soundscape in which Ó Riada composed. Piper Paddy Moloney attended the first Fleadh Cheoil, having already won competitions at féiseanna.²⁸⁴ Tin whistler Seán Potts played in ballad groups in pubs.²⁸⁵

²⁷⁷ Riada, *Musical*, pp. 49, 62-63, 78; G. Morrison, ‘Film Making’, in B. Harris and G. Freyer (eds.), *Integrating Tradition: The Achievement of Seán Ó Riada* (Sligo, 1981), p. 69.

²⁷⁸ Riada, *Musical*, pp. 58, 69.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 22, 24, 31-38.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 49, 69.

²⁸¹ Cooper, ‘Seán Ó Riada’, p. 104.

²⁸² Riada, *Musical*, p. 74.

²⁸³ G. Yeats, ‘The Rediscovery of Carolan’ in B. Harris and G. Freyer (eds.), *Integrating Tradition: The Achievement of Seán Ó Riada* (Sligo, 1981), p. 85; Ceoltóirí Chualann, *The Playboy of the Western World* (1962).

²⁸⁴ Glatt, *The Chieftains*, p. 8.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 51.

Like the ballad boom artists, Ceoltóirí Chualann built their success through commercial mechanisms (radio, recording, television).²⁸⁶ A professional group, traditional in style, led by a composer, integrating art music and recording commercially, was a substantial deviation from the cultural nationalist consensus. From the remnants of Ceoltóirí Chualann after Ó Riada's departure emerged The Chieftains. Although devoid of European influences, The Chieftains maintained Ó Riada's theories by using 'Irish' instruments (pipes, fiddle), repeated rhythms, ornamentation, and soloists.²⁸⁷ Like ballad groups, Comhaltas gave Ceoltóirí Chualann and The Chieftains a mixed reception. A review of Ceoltóirí Chualann in *Ceol* stated that the group 'must be regarded as any other common ceili band'.²⁸⁸ A subsequent review, however, said those 'who value the genuine traditional style in our dance music, played with accuracy and artistry, will welcome the new LP'. The lack of consensus is indicative of Ó Riada's hybrid approach; this was traditional music, but augmented in a manner that not all necessarily welcomed.

Like Fleischmann, Ó Riada received State support for compositions reinforcing nationalist narratives. He constructed his *Mise Éire* soundtrack around the uplifting folk melody 'Roisin Dubh'. It plays at the film's opening (Emmet's 1803 rebellion), at the release of prisoners after the Easter Rising and at the declaration of the 1918 election results. By doing so, Ó Riada places the three events in a single nationalist narrative. For the executions after 1916, Ó Riada uses heavy percussion to imply gunfire, while rapid, short, high-pitched notes on the violin convey urgency and panic. Side drums playing a marching rhythm accompany footage of paramilitary parades and long,

²⁸⁶ *Fermanagh*, 18th May 1968.

²⁸⁷ The Chieftains, 'An Combra Donn/Murphy's Hornpipe', *The Chieftains 1* (1964).

²⁸⁸ *Ceol: A Journal of Irish Music* 1 (1), p. 21.

mournful notes on the flute accompany Thomas Ashe's funeral. Notably, Ó Riada employs quotations from political songs. Melodies from 'The Red Flag' play over footage of the 1913 lockout, 'It's a long, long way to Tipperary' over footage of the Western Front and 'Memory of the Dead' (the tune to 'Easter Week') over images of the Rising.²⁸⁹ *Mise Éire* was well received, especially Ó Riada's soundtrack.²⁹⁰ *Saoirse?* uses similar devices. It opens with the Last Post and also quotes 'Clare's Dragoons'.²⁹¹ Before the release of *An Tine Bheo* in 1966, a government document expressed its propagandist intentions. The cinema, it said, was 'particularly suited' to 'impress upon the audience [the Rising's] echoing presence in their own lives today' because in film, uniquely, 'the visuals as a whole combine with the soundtrack to give the subject fresh significance'. At the film's opening, a solo voice sings 'Easter Week' while the camera shows pictures of 1916 veterans. The song, combined with the pictures, tells the audience to take pride in the Rising.²⁹² Ó Riada's soundtracks thus contributed to the perpetuation of heroic nationalist narratives.

After 1923 musicians consistently reimagined Irish traditions in new contexts. Most maintained the timbre and extra-musical characteristics set out by the Gaelic League, but also departed from its definitions well beyond even the most flexible interpretations before independence. Comhaltas took music beyond its role as a tool for language revival. It utilised new techniques and organisational structures to promote its music as a relevant, modern culture. Ó Riada similarly brought traditional music into a modern, art music setting which rejected some of the more contrived musicological definitions. The ballad revival, and later Celtic rock, integrated the sound quality and melodies of

²⁸⁹ *Mise Éire*, dir. George Morrison (Film, 1960, DVD, 2008).

²⁹⁰ *Press*, 3rd Oct. 1959; *Examiner*, 1st Oct. 1959.

²⁹¹ *Saoirse?*, dir. George Morrison (Film, 1966, DVD, 2007).

²⁹² NAI 'An Tine Bheo – 50th Anniversary 1916 Rising', DFA/2000/14/71.

traditional music as it was conceived into modern popular genres, redefining the instrumentation of traditional music. All of these movements, to a lesser or greater extent, deconstructed established criteria, reflecting contextual, cultural and technological change. As this implies, the simple divisions between modern and traditional music or between globalisation and cultural nationalism that previous studies have often drawn did not exist. Rather, traditional music survived precisely because it broke down those categories.

Music, Nationalism and Northern Ireland, 1923-1972

I

‘This morning a man was hanged. This Evening we had a concert’: Music, Nationalism and Northern Ireland, 1923-1967

Republicanism was not an effective force in Northern Ireland in 1923, and many dissidents north of the border were imprisoned.¹ Sinn Féin also declined in the south following de Valera’s departure, rarely participating in elections. In Northern Ireland, Catholics were never reconciled to what they saw as a discriminatory Protestant Unionist government. Constitutional nationalism survived in Northern Ireland in the form of the Nationalist Party, formed from the remnants of the Irish Parliamentary Party and pro-Treaty Sinn Féin and led by Joseph Devlin, in alliance with the Ancient Order of Hibernians. As Republicanism floundered, Devlin’s reorganised party dominated nationalist politics in Northern Ireland, although it abstained from the Northern Irish House of Commons until 1925 and did not form the official opposition until 1965. Its effectiveness was blunted by the large (though not invulnerable) unionist majority.² In 1945, the Nationalist MP Eddie McAteer formed the Anti-Partition League in an attempt to coordinate nationalist efforts more effectively, but Nationalist progress was limited, and they increasingly lost votes to the socialist Northern Ireland Labour Party.³ The IRA were largely inactive until the Second World War, during which it bombed

¹ MacEoin, *Twilight*, p. 16; C. Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard: The IRA and the Modern Irish State* (London, 1992), p. 51.

² A. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the Era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 257-259.

³ M. Mulholland, *Northern Ireland: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2003), p. 48.

targets in Britain, and the Border Campaign of 1956-1962, when it took direct military action. The campaign produced new martyrs for the Republican tradition, but was ultimately defeated by a combination of incompetent leadership and the successful implementation of internment by the British and Irish governments.⁴ Sinn Féin also sporadically revived its electoral activities. This section aims to demonstrate that while nationalist music maintained and cultivated a separate cultural identity for those opposed to Northern Ireland's union with Britain, it did not engage effectively with contemporary youth cultures, and did not contribute to an effective political movement. The new technological and cultural developments outlined in the previous chapter created a potentially appealing political youth culture in Northern Ireland, but nationalist movements of all shades largely failed to harness it.

For moderates and radicals alike, music was primarily a vehicle through which to engage in nostalgic performance, but the Northern Irish government had the capacity to restrict their efforts. After 1922, the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act gave the Home Affairs Minister the majority of the powers that DORA and the Restoration of Order in Ireland Acts had granted the government. Doing so put significant power at the Minister's whim, including powers to introduce internment and ban public demonstrations. These were augmented further through the Public Order Act in 1951 and the Flags and Emblems Act in 1954, which restricted the right to publicly display the Irish tricolour. Moreover, public funding of music through the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) and the Arts Council meant that performers were vulnerable to both government and public pressure. The BBC,

⁴ A. Sanders, *Inside the IRA: Dissident Republicans and the War for Legitimacy* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 13-14; B. O'Duffy, *British-Irish Relations and Northern Ireland: From Violent Politics to Conflict Regulation* (Dublin, 2007), p. 64.

similarly, operated under the scrutiny of governments that neither liked nor trusted it, as well as easily offended listeners, as Robert Savage demonstrates.⁵ Such pressure also affected the music transmitted by the broadcaster.

After partition, the most prominent nationalist musical performances in Northern Ireland were those of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish National Foresters. Their marching bands created large, attention-grabbing events. Multiple Forester bands marked the organisation's 50th anniversary in 1927, for example, attracting press reports and drawing attention to speeches condemning partition as an 'artificial barrier'.⁶ Nationalist processions increasingly asserted their right to public demonstration, even in Protestant areas. The Hibernians paraded through Lislea in August 1926, a predominantly Protestant area, in one of many examples. Such efforts were cautious; the Hibernians consulted the authorities in advance, but their music conveyed that these were explicitly nationalist events, asserting a separate identity in spite of unionist political dominance.⁷ In Tyrone in 1936, they advertised a parade with the slogan 'God Save Ireland'.⁸ At the conclusion of a meeting in Castlefin in Donegal in August 1938, Hibernians from Tyrone and Derry sang 'A Nation Once Again'. This communal performance constructed a shared nationalist identity, and also redirected the song's original meaning towards ending partition. The symbolism of nationalists from Northern Ireland disregarding the border to travel to the event in Donegal, in the Free State, reinforced that message.⁹

⁵ R. Savage, *The BBC's 'Irish Troubles': Television, Conflict and Northern Ireland* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 16, 184, 219-220.

⁶ *Fermanagh*, 18th Jun. 1927.

⁷ Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (henceforth PRONI), 'AOH Demonstration Fired On', HA/5/542; PRONI, 'Parliamentary Question', HA/23/1/114.

⁸ *Ulster*, 24th Feb. 1936.

⁹ *Strabane Chronicle* (henceforth *Strabane*), 20th Aug. 1938.

The level of cooperation between the Hibernians and the Nationalist Party meant that, while Republicans fought amongst themselves in the south, moderates established a more united front working towards reunification. As Nationalist MP Cahir Healy put it, ‘we know the Northern mind much better than either Collins, Griffith or de Valera’.¹⁰ They augmented their efforts with nationalist performance rituals, notably bands and communal singing at rallies. In May 1923, the Hibernians and Nationalists coordinated multiple demonstrations across Northern Ireland condemning partition, demanding the release of political prisoners and calling for unity.¹¹ In Derry, Joseph Devlin encouraged nationalists to unite, and told crowds that their ‘fathers made sacrifices, they died for their principles’. He then quoted ‘Memory of the Dead’, including the lines: ‘But true men, like you men/Are plenty here today’.¹² At election rallies, music created a spectacle that conveyed the strength of the movement and the party. In Dungannon in August 1932, ‘at least sixty’ Hibernian bands attended an election rally pledging loyalty to Devlin.¹³ Commemorations, as for mainstream parties in the south, created spaces for nationalist musical performance in which constitutionalists could claim historical legitimacy. Each year, nationalists commemorated the anniversary of John Redmond’s death. For the fifth anniversary in 1923, five buglers from the Legion of ex-servicemen played the Last Post, after a procession including Hibernian and Forester bands.¹⁴ These performances separated the nationalists from Republicans, who would not have commemorated constitutionalists (after Parnell) and would certainly not have invited buglers on behalf of ex-British servicemen. As had Parnell and Redmond, the

¹⁰ Hepburn, *Catholic*, p. 260.

¹¹ *Hibernian*, Mar. 1923; PRONI, ‘AOH Meetings, Commemorations’, HA/23/1/321.

¹² *Hibernian*, May 1923.

¹³ *Examiner*, 16th Aug. 1932.

¹⁴ *Hibernian*, Apr. 1923.

Nationalists also used music to claim a more radical heritage. Thus, Hibernian bands contributed to a procession commemorating Wolfe Tone in Bailieborough in 1931.¹⁵ In 1953, Cahir Healy and Anti-Partition league members attended a Manchester Martyrs commemoration in Clones. After Healy's speech, a singer performed 'God Save Ireland'.¹⁶

The Nationalist appropriation of rebel songs did not, initially, extend to Sinn Féin traditions. As such, Nationalist performance immediately after 1923 did not commemorate the Easter Rising and did not include the 'Soldier's Song'. However, memories faded by the late 1940s and Nationalists altered their approach. Three Nationalist MPs stood for the anthem at an Easter Rising commemoration in Omagh in 1948.¹⁷ In September 1950, a Hibernian branch in Derry played it to conclude a ceremony for the unfurling of a new banner.¹⁸ 'Amhrán na bhFiann' was the anthem of the country with which they wished to unite, and for the less politically fastidious was thus a natural choice. The practice became widespread in 1952. That year, for the first time, the *Hibernian Journal* reported that bands played the national anthem at Lady Day rallies across Northern Ireland.¹⁹ In 1957, Eddie McAteer attended a 1916 commemoration in Derry. After a procession, those gathered sang 'Amhrán na bhFiann'. A bugler then played the Last Post, marking the Easter rebels as legitimate military representatives of Ireland.²⁰ Just as the Parliamentary Party claimed the Fenian tradition through songs like 'God Save Ireland', therefore, Nationalists (eventually)

¹⁵ *Anglo-Celt*, 25th Jul. 1931.

¹⁶ *Anglo-Celt*, 28th Nov. 1953.

¹⁷ *Ulster*, 3rd Apr. 1948.

¹⁸ *Hibernian*, Sept. 1950.

¹⁹ *Hibernian*, Sept. 1952.

²⁰ *Ulster*, 27th Apr. 1957.

aligned themselves with the Easter rebels through the ‘Soldier’s Song’ and musical commemorations of 1916.

Nationalist musical performances often resulted in clashes with unionists, who staged violent attacks on Hibernian parades on multiple occasions.²¹ Two men who sang ‘God Save Ireland’ as they paraded past a Protestant church in Derry in 1932 were shot and wounded. The men claimed they were exercising their right to ‘make use of the King’s highway when engaged in a lawful purpose’.²² These were contestations over the right to enter and define political spaces. During a rally in 1955, police lines separated nationalists singing the ‘Soldier’s Song’ and unionists singing ‘The Sash My Father Wore’. The police line marked the boundary between unionist and nationalist space, but the sound of their respective ideologies as expressed in song travelled across that boundary and contested the space beyond, albeit fleetingly.²³ Nationalists used these clashes to highlight discrimination. Devlin spoke in hospital to the two men in Derry who were shot while singing ‘God Save Ireland’ and called the attack a ‘dastardly outrage’. Patrick McKenna MP, meanwhile, said it demonstrated ‘there could be no justice for Catholics in the six counties until partition is ended’.²⁴ As these examples suggest, music exacerbated sites of conflict. In other instances, nationalists and unionists stole one another’s band instruments, or police asked the Hibernians to parade without bands in order to minimise antagonism, only for the Hibernians to ignore them.²⁵

²¹ PRONI, ‘AOH Procession Fired On’, HA/32/1/522.

²² PRONI, ‘Attack on Procession of Ancient Order of Hibernian at Ballinderry’, HA/8/489.

²³ *Independent*, 11th Aug. 1955.

²⁴ PRONI HA/8/489.

²⁵ PRONI HA/23/1/114; PRONI, ‘Trustees of Silverwood Division of the AOH’, D1929/3/6/11.

The government and police responded to the likelihood of violence by banning nationalist parades, frequently after pressure from local Protestants, restricting nationalist musical performances. In Armagh in 1923, unionists asked the Minister for Home Affairs to prohibit an upcoming Hibernian parade with ‘bands and banners’ in the ‘interest of peace’.²⁶ The parade went ahead, as did many others, but in other instances the government did prohibit performances. The government treated Republican parades with greatest suspicion, especially during their violent campaigns. In 1940, ministers banned a march by the Silverwood Pipe Band. They explained:

This band is well conducted but when passing through Lurgan on occasions of this description it is generally accompanied by a rough element consisting partially of the IRA who make a habit of singing party songs. This attracts the Orange element. On at least one previous occasion trouble has arisen as a result.²⁷

The government clearly considered the possibility that political music could lead to violence in deciding whether to ban nationalist events. This was particularly true when marches passed through Protestant areas, or during large processions like that planned for the Fenian Rising centenary in 1967.²⁸ The result was that the Northern Irish government often restricted the musical pageantry that had characterised the political and commemorative culture of nationalist politics before partition, and which continued to characterise politics in the Republic.

Restrictive measures, whatever their intent, augmented music’s potency. Bans and restrictions attracted more extended newspaper comment than events themselves,

²⁶ PRONI HA/23/1/321.

²⁷ PRONI, ‘Prohibited Meetings Langan Urban District’, HA/32/1/479.

²⁸ PRONI, ‘AOH March Banned’, CAB/4/745; Home Office Papers/284/48/27.

particularly when public figures condemned them. When a féis was banned because organisers planned to fly the Irish flag, the Bishop of Clogher, Rev. Dr O'Callaghan, complained that it was a 'terrible affair in our Catholic country that people are not allowed to promote what is cultural and historical in our national way of life'.²⁹ For O'Callaghan, the ban only reinforced his separate cultural and national identity, and provided him with an opportunity to promote it in the national press. The mere presence of police was enough to alter the nature of reports. The *Ulster Herald* reported in 1955 that a 'considerable number of RUC' were in the vicinity as bands played the national anthem at a Sinn Féin rally in Strabane.³⁰ The police presence and legislative measures meant that musical performances became acts of defiance. In 1957, an IRA Easter Rising commemoration in Newry broke the ban on flying the tricolour. Five bands participated, and a bugler sounded the Last Post.³¹ Without the ban, the commemoration would not have been so acutely political.

As well as precipitating violence, these performances challenged the Unionist government's nation-building project. Between 1935 and 1938, Home Affairs Minister Richard Dawson Bates made several attempts to ban the 'Soldier's Song' which, as an alternative national anthem, offered a rival symbol of national allegiance. After multiple instances of nationalists singing the anthem to antagonise unionists ahead of the November 1935 election, a year that saw considerable intercommunity violence, Bates instructed police to prevent it being sung where it could 'lead to a breach of the peace'. One arrest followed, of John Joseph Edgar, who pleaded guilty. Bates then sought to ban the song outright, but RUC Inspector General Charles Wickham opposed the idea.

²⁹ PRONI, 'Féis Ban Deplored by Bishop', D2991/B/143/8.

³⁰ *Ulster*, 7th May 1955.

³¹ *Ulster*, 27th Apr. 1957.

He suggested that police could already act where a breach of the peace was likely, and that to intervene in Catholic areas where provocation was unlikely would cause rather than prevent disturbances. Undeterred, Bates drafted an order:

Any person who sings, renders, audibly whistles or assists in singing, rendering or audibly whistling or plays or causes to be sung, rendered, audibly whistled or played upon by or with the aid of any musical or other instrument whatever including gramophone and wireless received in any public place or within audible distance of any public place or permits to be sung, rendered, audibly whistled or plays on lands or premises in his occupation or control, the words and/or song entitled 'A Soldier's Song' shall be guilty of an offence under this regulation.

The Attorney General advised that the regulation was legal, but called it a 'mistake'.

Bates dropped the plans until 1938 when, ahead of more elections, he reworded the regulation. Wickham's response was adamant:

[I]t would be almost impossible for police to interfere unless in very strong force and then the result would be to create a disturbance rather than to prevent one... The police already have ample powers to deal with any conduct likely to lead to a breach of the peace and the proposed legislation would place them in no stronger position... It would tend towards encouraging the use of the song simply for the purpose of defying the police and would lead to complaints from the Protestant side that the Regulation was not being enforced when to do so would only exaggerate what probably was already a very difficult situation. At Gaelic and other matches and at Nationalist meetings either large forces of police would have to attend to deal with any possible breach of the peace or police would have to stay away to avoid seeming ignorant in the face of a breach of the regulation.

Bates withdrew the proposal, instead instructing police to intervene if the song was likely to cause 'outrage', although he insisted that police take a broad definition of such

circumstances.³² Wickham's reticence was well placed. In 1964, Sinn Féin's Sean Caughey was fined £2 for 'conduct likely to lead to a breach of the peace' when he sang 'Amhrán na bhFiann' at a rally in Ballycastle. Caughey refused to pay, and was imprisoned for one night as a result. The small fine and short sentence did not deter widespread press coverage.³³ A blanket ban would likely have attracted even greater notoriety. Nevertheless, these exchanges illustrate the level of deliberation and restraint in government regarding its approach to nationalist culture. While Bates was instinctively oppressive, he ultimately adhered to dissenting voices from within the State apparatus.

Unionist and government bodies also sought to specify instances in which the British national anthem would be compulsory. From 1944, CEMA allowed individual branches to decide whether or not to play the anthem, dividing local committees. In Lurgan, some members criticised the local committee's decision to make the anthem compulsory because it would deter Catholic patrons, the majority of their audience. In Omagh numerous committee members threatened to resign, and in Newry several did. In 1953, the Minister for Education refused to rule on the issue, but stated his preference that venues play the anthem. Consequently, the Arts Council made it compulsory at all events that it organised, but not all that it funded.³⁴ In 1946, the Ulster Unionist Council suggested the anthem be compulsory at all public functions, State-funded or otherwise. William Lowry, Attorney General, described the suggestion as 'utter folly':

³² PRONI, 'Proposed Legislation Prohibiting the Soldier's Song', HA/32/1/621.

³³ *Press*, 4th Jul. 1964; *Evening*, 20th Jul. 1964; *Fermanagh*, 1st Aug. 1964; *Examiner*, 14th Aug. 1964; *Independent*, 15th Aug. 1964.

³⁴ PRONI, 'Playing of the National Anthem', AC/3/2.

I really wonder at supposedly sane people calling for legislation that would compel, say, a concert in St Mary's Hall, Belfast, or St Columb's Hall, Derry, [both Catholic venues] to be brought to a conclusion by the playing of the national anthem. It would be almost wiser to compel the playing of "Dolly's Brae" or "The Sash My Father Wore".³⁵

Thus, the enthusiasm of this small section of unionists for an overtly British nation-building project extended into the regulation of musical symbolism. Nevertheless, similarly to Wickham's opposition to banning the 'Soldier's Song', more restrained opinions were ultimately more influential.

The BBC was subject to similar debates. The Northern Irish section, as noted previously, broadcast traditional Irish music. These broadcasts occasionally included rebel songs. A St Patrick's Day programme in 1936 included 'A Nation Once Again' and the 'Soldier's Song'.³⁶ Irish ballad programmes, similarly, included Peadar Kearney's 'Down by the Glenside' and 'Oh! Breathe Not His Name', Moore's tribute to Emmet.³⁷ Some unionists criticised these broadcasts and called for BBC Northern Ireland to be placed under the direct control of Stormont (the Northern Irish parliament) after a concert in 1938 that included 'Memory of the Dead'.³⁸ In 1954, Northern Ireland's Prime Minister described a programme that played the 'Soldier's Song' as 'offensive'.³⁹ In 1960, one Belfast viewer even complained when the children's programme *Blue Peter* included the 'Soldier's Song' in an episode about flags and anthems.⁴⁰ Increasingly, the BBC responded with self-censorship, both in Northern

³⁵ PRONI, 'Playing of National Anthem', CAB/9/B/264/1.

³⁶ BBCWAC, 'Anniversaries St Patrick's Day File 1b 1934-1937', R34/239/2.

³⁷ BBCWAC, 'Lesser Known Irish Ballads 1946-1947', NI4/116/1; BBCWAC, 'Let the People Sing 1958-1959', NI4/428/1.

³⁸ R. Cathcart, *The Most Contrary Region: The BBC in Northern Ireland, 1924-1984* (Belfast, 1984), p. 93.

³⁹ Savage, *BBC*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ *Independent*, 4th Jun. 1960.

Ireland and the rest of the UK. In 1941, the Northern Ireland director circulated a memorandum:

Even in a programme of straight music, the touchiness of people in Ireland is such that we frequently have to delete songs and other musical items from our programmes and, in fact, it is a constant worry as we have to spend so much time on an apparently trivial matter. Such songs as, for example, “The Minstrel Boy” offends a certain section of the public, while “The Boyne Water” offends another.

He also contacted the organisers of BBC Scotland’s ‘Children’s Hour’ after it included ‘Wearing of the Green’ in a programme. He suggested it was a tune they would ‘always avoid’.⁴¹ In 1960, the BBC chose not to play an album of rebel songs by Scottish ballad group ‘The Emmettones’ for anything but ‘historical or documentary’ purposes because they might cause ‘religious or political offence’. Songs included ‘Bold Robert Emmet’ and ‘Erin Go Bragh’.⁴² While doing so mitigated government criticism, it attracted that of nationalists and southern newspapers. For the *Connacht Sentinel*, the decision showed the BBC had been ‘humiliated by Stormont’.⁴³ For artists, conversely, bans provided free advertisement. Thus, singer Teresa Duffy claimed that her album of rebel songs (including ‘Kevin Barry’) was banned, but there is no evidence of such a decision.⁴⁴ The director’s 1941 memo cited both nationalist and unionist songs, but the BBC was more sensitive about nationalism. This was not unusual; the BBC similarly downplayed Scottish and Welsh nationalism, to the extent of preventing Scottish and Welsh nationalists from speaking on air.⁴⁵ BBC Northern Ireland took a ‘decidedly

⁴¹ BBCWAC, ‘Éire File 1a 1938-1941’, R34/347/1.

⁴² *Press*, 11th Nov. 1960.

⁴³ *Connacht Sentinel*, 22nd Nov. 1960.

⁴⁴ *Press*, 10th Dec. 1960.

⁴⁵ T. Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53* (Manchester, 2010), p. 197.

unionist point of view’ and made special broadcasts each year for the Orange Order’s 12th July parades, opening with a recording of ‘The Sash my Father Wore’.⁴⁶ These sensitivities were not a blanket ban. Despite expressing concern about ‘the words of “Clare’s Dragoons” by [Aloys] Fleischmann’ in 1957, the Northern Ireland Director decided that the piece was ‘safe enough’ to broadcast.⁴⁷ No consistent policy emerges from the BBC’s decisions, although it is unlikely to be coincidence that most of the bans coincide with periods of IRA violence. Broadly speaking older, moderate and artistic examples (Moore, Fleischmann) were more likely to be broadcast than provocative recent artists (the Emmettes).

Cultural nationalists perpetuated nationalist narratives in Northern Ireland, contributing to the image of a united nationalist front. As in the South, the GAA incorporated nationalist symbolism (cultural and political) into its musical performances. The GAA and Nationalist Party co-hosted a féis in aid of political prisoners’ dependents in 1938, asserting an association between traditional music and contemporary nationalist politics.⁴⁸ At the opening of the GAA’s Belfast stadium, Roger Casement Park, in June 1953 bands played ‘Faith of Our Fathers’ and the ‘Soldier’s Song’.⁴⁹ The performance therefore combined nationalist martyrdom (Casement Park), Catholic nationalism (‘Faith of our Fathers’), and Republicanism (the ‘Soldier’s Song’). The GAA also collaborated with the Gaelic League on ‘traditional’ music events.⁵⁰ One event in Newcastle included competitions in violin, accordion, and ballad singing.⁵¹ This music

⁴⁶ Hajkowski, *BBC*, p. 204; BBCWAC, ‘Orange Celebrations File 1 1954-1959’, NI3/726/1.

⁴⁷ BBCWAC R34/347/1.

⁴⁸ PRONI, ‘Copy letter from Healy to Pádraig MacNamee’, D2991/B/175/4.

⁴⁹ *Independent*, 15th Jun. 1953.

⁵⁰ *Examiner*, 12th Mar. 1956.

⁵¹ PRONI, ‘Féis An Dúin Programme 1962’, D2991/E/17/1.

constructed a narrative of cultural separation between nationalists and the unionist State whereby nationalists were not only politically, but historically and culturally different.

Unlike the Nationalists, Sinn Féin's relative absence from electoral politics restricted opportunities for mass musical performance. Republican literature often included songs, but public events were usually restricted to Dublin and poorly attended. Only 150 attended a concert addressed by O'Higgins in Dublin in 1933.⁵² Commemorative events were more popular. Sinn Féin hosted annual Wolfe Tone commemorations at Bodenstown, employing the familiar rituals of the Last Post and National Anthem.⁵³ The party also commemorated anti-treaty IRA fighters martyred during the Civil War. Bands played 'A Nation Once Again', by then associated with partition, when Sinn Féin unveiled a monument to one such martyr in 1924.⁵⁴ Republicans used these commemorations to position themselves within a continuous nationalist narrative. In 1963, Cathal Goulding, IRA chief of staff, formed the Wolfe Tone Society with the intention of using the United Ireland leader's bicentenary as a rallying point for the Republican movement.⁵⁵ It was also an opportunity to stress the involvement of Protestants like Tone in Republican history, including through a 'ballad concert' with an 'orange and green theme'.⁵⁶ These efforts included music. In Belfast, bands and ballad singers performed at one of the bicentenary events, concluding with a piper playing 'Memory of the Dead'.⁵⁷ Similarly, in 1966, bands played 'Memory of the Dead' at an Easter Rising Golden Jubilee commemoration in Omagh.⁵⁸ Through music, they

⁵² T. P. Coogan, *The IRA: A History* (Niwot, 1994), p. 231.

⁵³ *Press*, 24th Jun. 1935.

⁵⁴ *Fermanagh*, 29th Nov. 1924.

⁵⁵ S. Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68: Civil Rights, Global Revolt and the Origins of the Troubles* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 108-110.

⁵⁶ R. Johnston, *Century of Endeavour: A Biographical and Autobiographical View of the 20th Century in Ireland* (Bethesda, 2003), p. 186.

⁵⁷ *Fermanagh*, 16th Jun. 1963; *Evening*, 13th Jun. 1963.

⁵⁸ PRONI, 'Sinn Féin and Republican Clubs', HA/32/2/13; *Ulster*, 16th Apr. 1966.

incorporated 1798, 1916, and their own contemporary Republicanism into a single narrative that theoretically included Protestants.

While commemorative events positioned Sinn Féin as heirs to nationalist traditions, they lacked a tangible political agenda – as anti-conscription provided in 1918 – to which such associations could be applied. It was not until the more substantial, if inconsistent, electoral activities during and after the Border Campaign that Sinn Féin engaged in more significant musical performances.⁵⁹ In 1955, crowds celebrated victories in Fermanagh and Omagh by singing the ‘Soldier’s Song’ and ‘A Nation Once Again’.⁶⁰ This also applied in the Republic. In March 1957 Sinn Féin supporters in Ballinamore sang the national anthem and ‘Sean South of Garryowen’, in recognition of the electoral victory of John McGirl, then imprisoned for IRA activities.⁶¹ By associating the anthem of the revolution with contemporary martyrdom, Sinn Féin sought historical and national legitimacy for its political and military intentions. Elections gave Republicans additional opportunities for musical performances that reinforced that narrative.

Where Republicans were more active than Nationalists it was in writing new material. Songs emerged from three main sources. Some were written by veterans of the revolution, notably Brian O’Higgins.⁶² Later examples were written by professional folk artists, products of the 1950s revival. Sean Costelloe, who wrote ‘Sean South of

⁵⁹ B. Purdie, *Politics in the Streets: The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1990), p. 43.

⁶⁰ *Anglo-Celt*, 20th Aug. 1955.

⁶¹ *Leitrim*, 30th Mar. 1957.

⁶² Coogan, *IRA* p. 231; *Songs of Resistance 1968-1975* (Dublin, 1975), pp. 29-32.

Garryowen', owned a ballad pub in Leitrim.⁶³ Other writers were IRA activists, notably Brendan and Dominic Behan. Brendan was a member of the Fianna Éireann and the IRA.⁶⁴ He knew a 'number of Republican musicians' in his youth, not least amongst his own family.⁶⁵ His parents often sang nationalist ballads.⁶⁶ His father, Stephen, was in the anti-treaty IRA, while his mother, Kathleen, called herself a 'born... Fenian'.⁶⁷ Brendan also cited the influence of his maternal Uncle, 'Soldier's Song' lyricist Peadar Kearney.⁶⁸ His own politics followed suit, and he was tried for carrying explosives in 1939.⁶⁹ He was arrested again in 1942, but in general was an ineffectual revolutionary. His arrest in 1939 was for activities on his own initiative, rather than the IRA's, and in prison his IRA colleagues considered him unreliable enough to deliberately exclude him from their escape plans.⁷⁰ He had no active involvement after 1946.⁷¹

Like Brendan, Dominic cited the influence of his parents and Kearney (the only man he knew, he said, who was a 'bigger man' than his father).⁷² Most significant was Brendan. 'Whatever he did, I imitated,' Dominic wrote, 'whatever he read I read, whatever he sang or thought worth singing, I learned. And since singing always gives people an artistic bent of some description, I decided to write poetry.' His first childhood effort was certainly nationalist, entitled 'The day our blood was spilt we beat the English foe'.⁷³ Dominic joined the Fianna aged eleven, and participated in IRA

⁶³ *Leitrim*, 11th Mar. 1967.

⁶⁴ B. Behan, *Confessions of an Irish Rebel* (London, 1990), p. 64.

⁶⁵ B. Behan, *Hold Your Hour and Have Another* (London, 1985), p. 29.

⁶⁶ B. Behan, *Mother of all the Behans: The Story of Kathleen Behan* (London, 1984), p. 63.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 19, 54.

⁶⁸ Behan, *Confessions*, p. 177; B. Behan, *The Letters of Brendan Behan* (London, 1992), p. 18.

⁶⁹ Behan, *Letters*, p. 10; B. Behan, *Borstal Boy* (New York, 1971), pp. 14-15.

⁷⁰ R. Porter, *Brendan Behan* (New York, 1973), p. 5; MacEoin, *Twilight*, p. 506.

⁷¹ Porter, *Behan*, p. 6.

⁷² D. Behan, *Teems of Times and Happy Returns* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 16, 181.

⁷³ *Ibid.* pp. 114-115.

commemorations.⁷⁴ He and Brendan were in part products of radio and commercial structures. Dominic worked and recorded albums with Ewan MacColl, an influential figure in the British folk revival.⁷⁵ Both Behans performed on radio, increasing their public profile; both also wrote plays.⁷⁶ Like his brother, Dominic's repertoire largely consisted of Republican ballads. On one recording, he sang 'Legion of the Rearguard', but praised Cathal Brugha instead of de Valera. The song's lyricist, Jack O'Sheehan, successfully sued Behan for the unauthorised alteration.⁷⁷ Dominic, however, was also influenced by socialism to a greater extent than Brendan, expressing the view that the 'political struggle must now be switched to the industrial field'.⁷⁸

Republican songs celebrated their politicians and fighters and chastised Britain.

Electoral campaigns inspired some compositions. Republican prisoner Charles Leddy was entered as a candidate in West Belfast in 1935.⁷⁹ His campaign leaflets included a section entitled 'Songs to Sing During the Elections'. One song, to the tune of 'Paddies Evermore', declared:

So rise you people of the North,
Your duty it is clear.
Although betrayed as you have been,
Your freedom it is near.
So take your stand by Ireland's band
Of the boys in Dublin Jail,
Let England know, prepared you go,
To win back Innisfail.

⁷⁴ Behan, *Teems*, pp. 150, 176.

⁷⁵ Hanley and Millar, *Revolution*, p. 82; E. MacColl and D. Behan, *Streets of Song* (1964).

⁷⁶ Behan, *Letters*, p. 40; *Examiner*, 27th Jan. 1964; *Examiner*, 23rd May 1959; *Press*, 28th Sept. 1959; B. Behan, *The Quare Fellow: A Comedy-Drama* (London, 1960); D. Behan, *Posterity Be Damned* (London, 1960).

⁷⁷ *Examiner*, 25th Apr. 1959; *Examiner*, 26th Mar. 1960.

⁷⁸ Behan, *Teems*, pp. 36, 89.

⁷⁹ *Press*, 25th Oct. 1935.

The stirring perfect cadence of ‘Paddies Evermore’, here, accompanied the vow to ‘win back Innisfail’ from England in the name of Republican prisoners, primarily Leddy.⁸⁰

Songs also romanticised Republican martyrs. ‘A Ballad of Brave Men’ by Brian O’Higgins commemorated Patrick McGrath and Thomas Harte, IRA members executed for their part in the shooting of two police officers in 1940.⁸¹

Because they stood with Emmet, with Tone and with Lord Edward
With the Martyred Three of Manchester and the heroes of our day,
Because they fought like men, the tools of England slew them,
And they sleep with Kevin Barry in the lonely prison clay.⁸²

O’Higgins uses a strikingly Victorian masculinity (‘fought like men’) to associate McGrath and Harte with over a century of nationalist martyrdom. He merges several nationalist generations into one narrative, however incongruously. ‘Sean South of Garryowen’ was the most popular of these ballads. Sean South, with Fergal O’Hanlon, was killed during an IRA operation in Fermanagh in 1957. Costelloe described it as a ‘tribute to a gallant Irishman’.⁸³ The opening depicts men from both sides of the border, defying partition, approaching a ‘border town’ led by ‘Sean South of Garryowen’ to fight ‘for old Ireland’s cause’. Their ‘daring plan’, however, is foiled. The final verse laments:

No more he’ll hear the seagull cry, o’er the murmuring Shannon tide;
For he fell beneath the Northern sky, brave Hanlon at his side.
He has gone to join that gallant band of Plunkett, Pearse and Tone.
A martyr for old Ireland, Sean South of Garryowen.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ PRONI, HA/32/1/621.

⁸¹ Coogan, *IRA*, p. 148.

⁸² *Songs of the Irish Republic* (Cork, 1975), p. 32.

⁸³ *Press*, 20th Oct. 1971.

⁸⁴ *Irish Republic*, p. 4.

Costelloe refers to Wolfe Tone and the 1916 martyrs (Plunkett, Pearse). ‘No more he’ll hear the seagull cry’ is reminiscent of Francis Ledwidge’s ‘Lament for Thomas McDonagh’ (He shall not hear the bittern cry’), who was executed in 1916, while the final refrain quotes ‘Kevin Barry’ (‘martyr for old Ireland’).⁸⁵ Costelloe thus places South in a tradition of nationalist martyrdom. A simple chord progression, in D major, culminates in a determined perfect cadence accompanying the final refrain, and a tonic chord reinforces the quotation from ‘Kevin Barry’. This is accompanied by longer notes, conveying both mourning and militancy. How the song spread is unclear, although Costelloe’s involvement in running ballad venues suggests that folksingers were important.⁸⁶ Within months, it was a mainstay of Republican performances. At a Sinn Féin rally in March 1957, crowds sang ‘Sean South of Garryowen’ followed by ‘A Nation Once Again’ and the ‘Soldier’s Song’.⁸⁷ They therefore linked three generations of rebel song, augmenting the IRA’s historical legitimacy.

The accounts of former Republicans suggest that music was an important factor in their ideological development. In terms of the domestic soundscape, Liam Burke described his parents, Republicans and Gaelic League members, singing nationalist songs during his childhood.⁸⁸ New technology also contributed. According to IRA member Derry Kelleher, listening to nationalist music on records during his youth ‘played a part in this... awakening of my national conscience’.⁸⁹ Most accounts do not suggest that music triggered an instantaneous ‘awakening’ in this sense, but it was certainly a means

⁸⁵ F. Ledwidge, *The Complete Poems of Francis Ledwidge* (Dublin, 1998), p. 153.

⁸⁶ In Hanley and Millar, *Revolution*, p. 16, the authors suggest that *The Irish Catholic* first published it on 10th January 1957, but it does not appear in microfilm versions of the newspaper.

⁸⁷ *Anglo-Celt*, 23rd Mar. 1957.

⁸⁸ MacEoin, *Twilight*, p. 439.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 635.

through which family groups indulged their ideology. In the public sphere, concerts, pub-singers and Fianna parades constructed group identities.⁹⁰ Burke's first prominent memory of political involvement was a Fianna parade. He could not recall the speakers but remembered 'bands, banners, and singing rebel songs'.⁹¹ Tom Doran became involved in Republican politics through the Fianna. He described marching exercises during which the boys sang 'For Tone is Coming Back Again', a song about 1798 promising to make Ireland '[f]rom Tyrants' thralldom free'.⁹² The Fianna therefore represented their efforts as continuing those of the United Irishmen. Contemporary sources reinforce the importance of music in the Fianna in providing activities for young Republicans. Newspapers described Fianna bands playing at Sinn Féin commemorations, while a Fianna booklet published in 1964 encouraged music at social functions and printed the lyrics of the 'Marching Song of the Fianna Éireann' and the 'Soldier's Song'.⁹³ The Fianna's musical performances and the regularity with which they are cited as key moments of political engagement suggest that music was an important formative activity for Republicans.

The IRA's musical performances facilitated public displays that gave them the gloss of a legitimate army. In the 1930s, encouraged by conflict with the Blueshirts, the IRA conducted numerous band-led parades in military formation. In Killarney in 1935 the IRA, Cumann na mBan and a band marched to an evening concert concluding with the national anthem.⁹⁴ The men's organisations engaged in such activities more frequently, but as Cumann na mBan's participation indicates these activities were also open to

⁹⁰ MacEoin, *Twilight*, p. 724.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 440-441.

⁹² *Ibid.* pp. 497-499.

⁹³ *Press*, 24th Jan. 1935; *The Young Guard of Erin* (Dublin, 1964).

⁹⁴ Cronin, *Blueshirts*, p. 49; NAI, 'Volunteer dance and concert at Town Hall, Killarney, Co. Kerry on 8 January 1935', JUS/8/201.

women. In July 1936, around fifty Cumann na mBan members marched the length of Dublin's O'Connell Street. Speakers condemned suppression of the IRA, criticised working conditions for Catholics in Belfast, and expressed support for dissident Republican hunger strikers. The 'Soldier's Song' concluded the meeting.⁹⁵ The IRA also enhanced its recruiting efforts through music. After crowds sang the 'Soldier's Song' at an IRA meeting in Cabra in March 1935, a speaker asserted that they were there to recruit and would 'not rest until all Free State and British soldiers were out of Ireland'.⁹⁶

As during the revolutionary period, Republicans used music extensively in prison. In song, supporters conveyed their solidarity with IRA inmates and conveyed that in their view the prisoners represented a national cause. Republican protesters supporting IRA prisoner John McGirl in Leitrim in 1957, for example, sang the 'Soldier's Song'.⁹⁷ Sinn Féin also organised concerts as fundraisers in aid of political prisoners.⁹⁸ In Arbour Hill in the 1940s, prisoners started a band and orchestra to maintain morale.⁹⁹ Brendan Behan described singing 'Dark Rosaleen' to pass time in his cell, and 'Kevin Barry' to entertain fellow prisoners.¹⁰⁰ He also wrote 'The Auld Triangle' based on his experiences:

A hungry feeling, came o'er me stealing,
And the mice were squealing in my prison cell,
And the auld triangle, went jingle jangle,
All along the banks, of the Royal Canal.

⁹⁵ NAI, 'Activities of Cumann na mBan: public collections, sale of flags and meetings', JUS/2008/117/723.

⁹⁶ NAI, 'Meeting of IRA at Cabra, Dublin, 7 March 1935', JUS/8/194.

⁹⁷ *Leitrim*, 13th Apr. 1957.

⁹⁸ *Western*, 3rd Jan. 1959.

⁹⁹ MacEoin, *Twilight*, pp. 510-511.

¹⁰⁰ Behan, *Borstal*, pp. 25-34.

The triangle was that which the guards rang to call prisoners to their tasks.¹⁰¹ Having lamented prison conditions, Behan engages in self-parody.

But in the female prison, there are seventy women,
And I wish it was with them, that I did dwell,
And the auld triangle, went jingle jangle,
All along the banks, of the Royal Canal.

Behan's combination of self-mocking and bitter despondency captures the melancholy of prison life. He performed the song as a traditional, unaccompanied ballad with a low-pitched, harsh voice and lower, longer notes end-weighting each line, consonant with the bitter lyrics.¹⁰² The song's dissemination owed much to its inclusion in Behan's play *The Quare Fellow*; Behan performed it himself on the opening night.¹⁰³

Given the lack of contemporary evidence, most accounts of prison life are retrospective. The contemporary material available supports the view that music was recreational for prisoners. IRA prisoner Eamonn Boyce, in a diary kept in Belfast Jail between 1956 and 1962, mentions music frequently. He never intended the diary for publication and so it may be considered a relatively unembellished source on prison life.¹⁰⁴ Boyce enjoyed the singing at Mass, particularly as 'two nice girls' were in the choir.¹⁰⁵ Prisoners held concerts regularly, including week-long féiseanna in 1959 and 1960. Boyce had limited space on which to write, and his entries were usually limited to a handful of words. The

¹⁰¹ Behan, *Confessions*, p. 54.

¹⁰² B. Behan, 'The Auld Triangle', *Sings Irish Folksongs and Ballads* (2008).

¹⁰³ S. de Búrca, *Brendan Behan; a Memoir* (Newark, 1971), p. 28; Behan, *Mother*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁴ E. Boyce, *The Insider: The Belfast Prison Diaries of Eamonn Boyce 1956-1962* (Dublin, 2007), p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 71, 138.

extended comment that the féiseanna inspired, therefore, illustrates his enjoyment: ‘The féis is wonderful altogether. Dance and singing competitions on tonight with the mouth organ. With the help of God we’ll have a great finish on Tuesday night with a big dance’.¹⁰⁶ Prisoners also smuggled in a record player and radio. Among their records was the *Mise Éire* soundtrack.¹⁰⁷ To the extent that Boyce was engaging in resistance, he said keeping the radio made him feel defiant.¹⁰⁸ Republican prisoners also boycotted concerts held by Protestant prisoners because they included ‘God Save the Queen’.¹⁰⁹ However, the most prominent musical activities (concerts, féiseanna) were permitted by the prison regime rather than acts of resistance. Indeed, at one concert the compere thanked the prison governor in his speech.¹¹⁰ Music had limitations and could even damage morale. Boyce complained each summer, during the unionist marching season, about the noise made by the bands. Hibernian parades were equally noisy, and he found them equally irksome.¹¹¹ In some instances, concerts were simply inadequate for raising morale in what remained a highly restrictive environment. Boyce wrote curtly of one concert in December 1960 that he had ‘seen it all before’.¹¹² When Robert McGladdery was hanged in December 1961, Boyce wrote: ‘This morning a man was hanged. This evening we had a concert’.¹¹³ Boyce’s juxtaposition of the two neatly indicates the gap between music’s ability to raise morale and the despondent reality of prison life.

¹⁰⁶ Boyce, *Insider*, pp. 241-245, 304-305.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 204, 309.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 433.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 263.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 202.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 182, 240, 355.

¹¹² *Ibid.* p. 320.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* p. 384.

Boyce's disillusionment is emblematic of a growing nationalist disenchantment.

Dominic Behan's 'The Patriot Game' expressed most overtly the view that the one-dimensional nostalgia practised both by nationalists and Republicans was insufficient:

Come all you young rebels and list' while I sing,
For love of one's country is a terrible thing,
It banishes fear with the speed of a flame,
And it makes us all part of the patriot game.

My name is O'Hanlon, and I'm just gone sixteen,
My home is in Monaghan, where I was weaned,
I learned all my life cruel England to blame,
And so I'm a part of the patriot game.

It is barely two years since I wondered away,
With the local battalion of the bold IRA.
I'd read about heroes, and counted the same
To play out my part in the patriot game.

They tell me how Connolly was shot in the chair,
His wounds from the fighting all bloody and bare.
His fine body twisted, all battered and lame.
They soon made me part of the patriot game.

This Ireland of mine has for long been half free,
Six counties lie under John Bull's tyranny,
And still de Valera is greatly to blame,
For shirking his part in the patriot game.

I don't mind a bit if I shoot down police
They are lackeys for war never guardians of peace
And yet at deserters I'm never let aim
The rebels who sold out the patriot game.

And now as I lie with my body all holes,
I think of those traitors who bargained and sold
I wish that my rifle had given the same,
To the quislings who sold out the patriot game.¹¹⁴

Like his brother, Dominic's songs benefitted from his theatre work. 'The Patriot Game' featured in his play, *Posterity be Damned*, from which it garnered its initial publicity.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Behan, *Posterity*.

¹¹⁵ *Press*, 28th Sept. 1959.

It became widely known after The Clancy Brothers recorded a version (although they omitted references to de Valera and shooting police).¹¹⁶ Behan's song, written after South and O'Hanlon's deaths in 1957, laments the naivety of the narrator O'Hanlon and the Republican movement generally. The simple rhythm, low pitch and abundant long notes emphasise words that betray his naivety ('rebels', 'country', 'fear', 'part', 'thing', 'flame'), satirising the simple idealism and bitter outcome of 'the patriot game'.¹¹⁷ O'Hanlon is misled by his youth ('just gone sixteen') and seduced by hatred of 'John Bull' and stories of 'heroes' into the 'terrible' love of 'country' (he dies for the land rather than the people). Ultimately, his wounds turn him not on Britain, but his fellow Irishmen, particularly de Valera and the police, the 'quislings' who shirked and 'sold out' their parts in the patriot game. Some simplistically interpreted the song as a condemnation of de Valera's failure to support the IRA and 'a tribute to the memory of Fergal O'Hanlon'.¹¹⁸ While it was certainly a lament on O'Hanlon's death, Behan made clear that it was also a critique of nationalism. Behan labelled the leaders of the national movement 'priests and politicians who had never fired a shot in anger' working for the 'benefit of Irish-Irelander businessmen and shopkeepers'.¹¹⁹ However, nor was 'The Patriot Game' solely a socialist critique of nationalism. Certainly, Behan still held 'cruel England to blame'. He explained:

England is to blame for the situation since if she didn't occupy my country there would exist no national "problem" to serve the old fogies and the young idealists; if Britain left us alone the young people would see that there is not much profit to be gained, ever, in dying for rocks and lakes. They would learn how the real problem in Ireland is one of developing the economy of the country to suit the needs of the people.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *Independent*, 9th Sept. 1963;

¹¹⁷ The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, 'The Patriot Game', *In Person at Carnegie Hall* (1963).

¹¹⁸ *Limerick*, 11th Jan. 1964.

¹¹⁹ Behan, *Teems*, p. 36.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 166-167.

For Behan, British occupation was not irrelevant. Certainly, he concedes little legitimacy for the Northern Irish unionist majority and ultimately sought unification. However, in his view nationalism alone (without socialism) did not solve Ireland's problems. Whether or not his assessment is completely accurate, his frustrations do point towards the limits and the simplicity of the Republican movement's ideological appeal.

Behan's frustrations are indicative of the state of nationalist politics by the 1960s. The nostalgic nationalism of the Hibernians and Nationalist Party embodied in their appropriation of radical music equated their constitutional approach with revolutionary struggle. In doing so, it located revolutionary action in the past, with only symbolic value for the present, and did not engage with contemporary youth cultures as the revolutionary movement had at the start of the twentieth century, and as the civil rights movement would in the late 1960s. Although Sinn Féin and the IRA recreated, for periods, the ideals such songs expressed, their music and politics offered no practical route to achieve them. For the small numbers engaged in physical resistance, music expressed a romanticised ideal and maintained morale during their inevitable imprisonment, but ultimately did not contribute to the cultivation of a mass movement as it had from 1913-1921. This is reflected in the inconsistency with which Republicans utilised music in electoral politics, and in the despondency of 'The Patriot Game'. Nevertheless, music perpetuated a distinct identity that was, certainly as far as many unionists were concerned, incompatible with their conception of Northern Ireland. Moreover, while not yet married to an effective political strategy, nationalist music was

associated with youth politics through the folk revival and the international left through figures like Behan. That relationship was vital in succeeding decades.

II

‘For the most part we played rebel songs’: Music and Civil Rights

In the late 1960s, a range of protest movements with their origins in transnational youth politics developed across the first, second and third world almost simultaneously.¹²¹

They originated in the civil rights movement in America, and were catalysed by protests, especially by the increasing student population, against the Vietnam War.¹²²

These young political actors were also among the primary consumers of popular commercial music. Their politics and musical cultures increasingly espoused the same ideals.¹²³ Their music incorporated folk revival, hymns, and gospel songs associated with African-American culture and civil rights. ‘The folk revival in the US’ writes musicologist Sarah Hill, ‘was inseparable from leftist politics... The rhetoric of protest songs was clear, and the delivery unencumbered by technology’.¹²⁴ It was the songs of folk revivalists, notably (though not exclusively) ‘We Shall Overcome’, that characterised the protest marches and sit-ins of the ‘long 1968’, and which provided ‘a crucial stimulus for the developing activism of more overtly engaged figures’.¹²⁵ In all cases, the 1968 movements encompassed a range of views, from moderate reformers to violent radicals. These divisions were also reflected in music.¹²⁶

¹²¹ B. Kutschke, ‘In lieu of an Introduction’ in B. Kutschke and B. Norton (eds.), *Music and Protest in 1968* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 5.

¹²² R. Fraser, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (London, 1988), pp. 1-2, 64.

¹²³ *Ibid.* p. 262.

¹²⁴ S. Hill, “‘This is My Country’: American Popular Music and Political Engagement in “1968”” in B. Kutschke and B. Norton (eds.), *Music and Protest in 1968* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 51.

¹²⁵ Fraser, *1968*, pp. 35, 44; Adlington, ‘Expressive Revolutions’ p. 24; Hill, ‘This is My Country’, p. 51.

¹²⁶ Hill, ‘This is My Country’, p. 57.

In the UK, the 1968 movements influenced popular musicians, but only fleetingly.¹²⁷ The longest lasting products of movements that claimed 1968 as their political heritage were, arguably, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), and the conflict in Northern Ireland. Although there were modernisers in both the nationalist and Republican movements, neither movement was effective in harnessing these youth cultures. The Nationalist Party continued to define itself almost exclusively by its position on partition, while in the Republican movement commemorations and armed training camps predominated.¹²⁸ Northern Ireland's 'long 1968' originated in despondent assessments of existing movements like that expressed in 'The Patriot Game'. Activists unconvinced by existing nationalist politics had formed the Campaign for Social Justice in 1964. They bypassed Stormont, and solicited support for reform in Northern Ireland from British Labour MPs, with whom they then formed the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster (CDU).¹²⁹ Communists and others on the left sought to unite the Catholic and Protestant working-classes through the Connolly Association, originally set up to commemorate James Connolly.¹³⁰ They cooperated with Roy Johnston, who founded Communist groups at Trinity College. Johnston also worked with IRA Chief of Staff Cathal Goulding. In 1965, the Belfast Trades Council brought these groups together along with the Northern Ireland Labour Party, leading to the formation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in 1968. However, as Simon Prince demonstrates, from its outset the civil rights campaign was an almost impossibly broad church of nationalists, Republicans, communists, and socialists.¹³¹

¹²⁷ A. Moore, 'British Rock: the short "1968" and the long' B. Kutschke and B. Norton (eds.), *Music and Protest in 1968* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 170; Fraser, *1968*, p. 161.

¹²⁸ Hanley and Millar, *Revolution*, pp. 79-82.

¹²⁹ Prince, *Northern*, p. 82.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 91.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 103-114.

NICRA campaigned on housing and discrimination, heavily inspired by the protest movements described above. However, against communist wishes, their first protest was against the banning of the Republican Clubs (a Sinn Féin front). Nationalist MPs added their support. Austin Currie suggested a march from Coalisland to Dungannon; the first of many civil rights marches of which the most substantial was that from Belfast to Derry in January 1969. NICRA initially discouraged violence, but could not prevent clashes with police. After the summer of 1968, its policy was to actively provoke a police overreaction.¹³² Catholic residents barricaded parts of Derry, while activists frustrated with a lack of progress formed new groups. At Queen's University, a student group named People's Democracy brought activists such as Bernadette Devlin and Michael Farrell who were active in transnational political movements to the forefront. They became major figures in the civil rights campaign.¹³³ More radical and confrontational activists in Derry, notably the journalist Eamonn McCann, formed the Derry Housing Action Committee (DHAC) (later the Derry Citizens Action Committee (DCAC)). They demanded faster reform, and took sole responsibility for organising marches in Derry, including through Protestant areas.¹³⁴ Ill-disciplined police entered barricaded areas at the end of 1968, causing further violence to which Republicans responded by forming a 'Protection Association'. As Republicans protected protesters, the less well-prepared moderates and leftists lost influence in the movement.¹³⁵ Protests became more confrontational, culminating in riots during the loyalist marching season in 1969 and the violent 'Battle of the Bogside' in August, precipitating the deployment of British troops.

¹³² Prince, *Northern*, pp. 116-123, 156.

¹³³ Prince, *Northern*, p. 148; Sanders, *Inside*, p. 41.

¹³⁴ Prince, *Northern*, pp. 134-135, 158.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 211.

Whether or not the civil rights movement was a nationalist one is an open historiographical question. As Simon Prince writes, 1968 was a ‘global revolt, but across the world it took place in national and local contexts’.¹³⁶ Richard English argues that in Northern Ireland the revolt included a dispute over the legitimacy of the State itself that clearly did not apply elsewhere. ‘There is no doubt’ he writes, ‘that the lines of Northern Ireland’s civil rights battle very quickly became those of nationalist versus unionist’ such that ‘the 1960s civil rights episode did involve a phase in the ever evolving politics of nationalist Ireland’.¹³⁷ Music provides one prism through which we might analyse the influences, ideologies and nationalism of the movement. Existing comments on this question have taken a rigidly periodised perspective. Tim Pat Coogan writes that in 1969 ‘the Catholics protested against their situation in a new civil rights fashion to the tune and inspiration of “We Shall Overcome” rather than “The Soldier’s Song”’.¹³⁸ Eamonn McCann similarly states that after the arrival of British troops, ““We Shall Overcome” and “We Shall Not be Moved” gave way to “The Soldier’s Song” and “Kevin Barry”’.¹³⁹ The following section questions these neat distinctions.

The new songs entering the Northern Irish soundscape explicitly demonstrate the influence of international movements. A DHAC booklet in December 1968 included ‘The Civil Rights Cause’, set to the tune of ‘The Patriot Game’ (demonstrating the ease with which activists adapted existing tunes and their politics for new contexts). The long notes interrupting each line, used by Behan to criticise unsophisticated patriotism, in this instance highlight ‘laws’ that ‘kept down’ Catholics. The final verse explicitly articulates civil rights objectives:

¹³⁶ Prince, *Northern*, p. 8.

¹³⁷ R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London, 2006), p. 367.

¹³⁸ Coogan, *IRA*, p. 347.

¹³⁹ E. McCann, *War and an Irish Town* (London, 1980), p. 83.

“One man, one vote” that we constantly cried,
 And all over Britain, they’re wondering why,
 So it’s up to you Harold, to push for a change,
 Are we classed as British? Yes, “only by name.”

The song criticises discriminatory voting systems, and challenges Prime Minister Harold Wilson to intervene. Notably, it is not the grievances of Irish nationals to which the song appeals, but the rights of British citizens.¹⁴⁰ These lyrics engaged more closely with Northern politics than the romanticised rebellion expressed in nationalist songs, but nonetheless these more radical groups in Derry still used a nationalist tune for their immediate ideological context.

Most commonly, civil rights activists appropriated American civil rights songs, particularly ‘We Shall Overcome’ and ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’.¹⁴¹ ‘We Shall Overcome’ provides a message of defiance and inevitable, vaguely defined, success.

We shall overcome,
 We shall overcome,
 We shall overcome, some day,
 Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe,
 We shall overcome, some day.

In that it was a simple, adaptable format, ‘We Shall Overcome’ was not dissimilar to nationalist songs. Its repetitive rhythm reinforces these qualities and facilitates participation. Nevertheless, the performance directions (‘moderately slow with determination’) and slow tempo (68 crotchets per minute) indicate its stylistic differences. This was not a rousing revolutionary anthem, nor a marching song, nor a

¹⁴⁰ PRONI, ‘Civil Rights Demonstration General’, HA/32/2/28.

¹⁴¹ *Independent*, 26th Aug. 1968; *Ulster*, 2nd Nov. 1968.

lament. Instead, it has more in common with a gospel song or hymn, with multiple plagal cadences emphasising the spiritual resistance.¹⁴² ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’, similarly, conveyed defiance:

We shall not, we shall not be moved,
We shall not, we shall not be moved,
Just like a tree that’s standing by the water,
We shall not be moved.

Later verses proclaim ‘Black and white together, we shall not be moved’, but the simple format meant that it was easily altered. It uses three chords: the tonic, subdominant and dominant. A religious plagal cadence accompanies the biblical reference ‘Just like a tree that’s standing by the water’, in which the strength of one with faith is equivalent to a tree independent of rain, thus expressing unwavering belief in the relevant cause. A more emphatic perfect cadence reinforces the assertive final line.¹⁴³ Civil rights activists used such songs extensively. A DHAC booklet in December 1968 was entitled ‘We Shall Overcome’. The second page was headed ‘We shall overcome if...’ followed by calls to expose ‘cracks in the establishment’.¹⁴⁴ DHAC demonstrators sang ‘We Shall Overcome’ in the Derry Guildhall foyer in August 1968, as did 1500 protesters in Enniskillen in April 1969.¹⁴⁵ The adaptability of protest songs facilitated such activities. People’s Democracy demonstrators protesting ‘police brutality in Derry’, for instance, sang ‘She shall not be moved’ in honour of Bernadette Devlin, recently elected MP for Mid-Ulster.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² P. Seeger, *We Shall Overcome* (1963).

¹⁴³ The Almanac Singers, ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’, *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs* (1955).

¹⁴⁴ PRONI HA/32/2/28.

¹⁴⁵ *Press*, 16th Apr. 1969; Purdie, *Politics*, pp. 185-186.

¹⁴⁶ *Fermanagh*, 26th Apr. 1969.

The movement did not only adopt civil rights songs, but also civil rights performance practices. Solo singers with acoustic guitars, central to the global protest movement, often played at civil rights events in Northern Ireland, as at a People's Democracy rally outside Belfast City Hall in June 1969.¹⁴⁷ Most common were sit-in protests. In Dungannon in August 1968, NICRA protesters seeking to highlight 'discrimination in housing and jobs' staged a sit-down on a main road and sang 'We Shall Overcome' and 'We Shall Not Be Moved'.¹⁴⁸ Activists timed these demonstrations so as to associate their cause with international movements. In November, on International Human Rights Day, protesters sang 'We Shall Not Be Moved' in Stormont.¹⁴⁹ Sit-down performances were disruptive without being aggressive, forcing police to physically remove protesters and 'in this way expose the violence of the police and bring public pressure to bear on them'.¹⁵⁰ Songs gave these defiant acts ideological context. In July 1968, six DHAC protesters sat down on Craigavon Bridge and sang 'We Shall Overcome' before police carried them away.¹⁵¹ Their protest, the song implied, was part of a peaceful, international movement. Police appeared heavy-handed, the protesters peaceable and determined.

Music also evidenced the movement's ideological breadth and variation. At a People's Democracy march in Drogheda in April 1969, the marchers expressed the group's socialist influences with a rendition of 'The Internationale'.¹⁵² In June, in Newry, marchers from the same organisation demonstrated their civil rights influences by

¹⁴⁷ PRONI, 'Folder created by Kevin Boyle entitled 'P.D.' relating to The People's Democracy and Civil Rights', D3297/1/12.

¹⁴⁸ *Independent*, 26th Aug. 1969.

¹⁴⁹ *Ulster*, 2nd Nov. 1968.

¹⁵⁰ PRONI HA/32/2/28.

¹⁵¹ *Press*, 26th Jul. 1968.

¹⁵² *Independent*, 7th Apr. 1969.

singing ‘We Shall Overcome’.¹⁵³ As protests grew, the music adopted by protesters indicates that many interpreted events in a nationalist context, particularly with the emergence of more radical groups like those in Derry. Bernadette Devlin described a People’s Democracy rally in 1968 at which Communist activist Betty Sinclair invited crowds to sing ‘the anthem of the civil rights movement’ only to hear ‘A Nation Once Again’ in response.¹⁵⁴ She told the story years later, through the lens of the Troubles, and so may have embellished it. Contemporary reports, however, imply similar trends. Protesters outside Derry Guildhall on 6 April 1969 sang the ‘Soldier’s Song’.¹⁵⁵ In July, police described demonstrators in Derry ‘singing the Soldier’s Song’ around bonfires.¹⁵⁶ While civil rights were the campaign’s focus, it was also appropriated into nationalist narratives.

Alongside music at rallies, the civil rights movement expressed itself in the form of music on pirate radio stations. As far as protesters were concerned, the BBC in Northern Ireland was a Protestant organisation. Most BBC employees were Protestant, and as noted it had previously taken a deliberately unionist editorial standpoint.¹⁵⁷ It is in this context that pirate radio stations must be understood. In January 1969, shortly after erecting barricades marking the boundaries of ‘Free Derry’, protesters set up a transmitter and began broadcasting as ‘Radio Free Derry’.¹⁵⁸ It went off air after five days, but returned in August.¹⁵⁹ It was undoubtedly an expression of international youth culture; pirate stations like Radio Luxembourg and Radio Caroline challenged the BBC

¹⁵³ *Independent*, 3rd Jun. 1969.

¹⁵⁴ *Independent*, 18th Apr. 1989.

¹⁵⁵ *Examiner*, 7th Apr. 1969.

¹⁵⁶ Queens University Belfast Archives (henceforth QUBA), Scarman Tribunal Evidence (henceforth STE) Days 6-10, MS 33/2/2.

¹⁵⁷ Cathcart, *Contrary*, p. 247; Savage, *BBC*, p. 102.

¹⁵⁸ McCann, *War*, p. 53.

¹⁵⁹ *Press*, 15th Jan. 1969; *Limerick*, 11th Aug. 1969.

and created spaces on the airwaves for the younger generation's commercial musical culture. Just as barricades established geographical spaces beyond unionist rule, Radio Free Derry established a space on the airwaves outside the remit of the unionist BBC. As they expressed it, having 'their own Radio' was evidence that they were 'running their own affairs very successfully'.¹⁶⁰ This thesis has noted sound's physical mobility on several occasions. The mobility of radio broadcasts was even greater. Radio Free Derry transmitted political messages alongside a combination of popular and political music.¹⁶¹ Through commercial music, the movement engaged with youth culture, in contradistinction to the less varied repertoire of older political groups. On the second night, they played Elvis Presley's 'Surrender', the announcer said, 'for the police force from all their friends in the Lecky Road'. The protesters reinterpreted a popular love song, via its title, to mock the authorities.¹⁶² Nevertheless, pirate radio also took on a nationalist character. Eamonn McCann, who contributed to Radio Free Derry, wrote that 'for the most part we played rebel songs'.¹⁶³ People's Democracy began a similar station, 'Radio Free Belfast' the same month, and broadcast 'a steady stream of anti-government propaganda interspersed with patriotic songs and pop record requests'.¹⁶⁴ The 'patriotic songs' exposed divisions within the movement. In *"The People's Democracy": From a Working-Class Viewpoint* the Irish Communist organisation criticised the station for transmitting political music that would alienate 'working-class Protestant areas':

90% of the material put out by "Radio Free Belfast" was made up of Catholic music (that is to say, the political music of the Catholic community). A feeble attempt was late made by

¹⁶⁰ PRONI, "'Radio Free Derry' Transcripts', D3297/9/3.

¹⁶¹ *Press*, 10th Jan. 1969; *Press*, 11th Jan. 1969.

¹⁶² *Independent*, 11th Jan. 1969.

¹⁶³ McCann, *War*, p. 54.

¹⁶⁴ *Independent*, 26th Aug. 1969.

[Michael] Farrell to deny that music functioned as political propaganda. In Belfast in particular, songs are the signature tunes of sectarian politics. What would be the effect on the Falls of a “revolutionary socialist” radio on the Shankill that spent most of its time playing “No Surrender” etc.?.. The damage done by the sectarianism of Radio Free Belfast is incalculable.¹⁶⁵

The Communists’ criticism was almost certainly encouraged by their desire to discredit rival organisations, in this case People’s Democracy, but the pattern is consistent. The pirate stations did not limit themselves to popular music or transnational protest song. Instead, they combined youth politics and civil rights with nationalism by playing nationalist songs.

The musical performances of the movement often precipitated clashes with police and unionists. Although the Hibernians previously prevented any unionist monopoly on marching, the scale of civil rights marches and their refusal to countenance sectarian boundaries posed a more substantial challenge to the unionist hegemony.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, Orange Order parades were often targeted for protests. When protesters in Derry sat down on the route of an Orange march and sang civil rights songs on 12th July 1969, the largest annual day of Orange parades, police lifted them aside.¹⁶⁷ When marches passed through Protestant areas, civil rights activists could use music to convey their ideology. Loyalist counter-demonstrators blocked protesters marching from Belfast to Derry in January 1969 at the bridge into Antrim. In response, the protesters sang ‘The Internationale’ and ‘The Sash My Father Wore’; in doing so they sought to demonstrate that they were non-sectarian, although mostly it was, in the words of one of the

¹⁶⁵ NUIGA, Kevin Boyle Papers, A44/1/2/8.

¹⁶⁶ Jarman, *Material Conflicts*, p. 76.

¹⁶⁷ QUBA, STE Days 6-10, MS 33/2/2.

marchers ‘a bit of a joke’.¹⁶⁸ The potential for physical confrontation would have remained without singing, but music was an antagonising factor. In Belfast’s Market Square in November 1968, unionists attacked a People’s Democracy march, and police gave folksinger Sean Dynes protection after ‘he was set upon by several of the unionist supporters’.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, journalist Frank Curran told the Scarman Tribunal (established to investigate violence during the summer of 1969), that civil rights protesters in Derry sang songs that were ‘quite obviously derisive’ towards the Orangemen.¹⁷⁰ The emotive nature of such performances could be an outlet for aggression as much as an inspiration for it. James Doherty, Nationalist Party chairman, told the Scarman Tribunal that he tried ‘to keep the crowd back and succeed[ed] reasonably well by getting them to let off steam in some other way – like singing’.¹⁷¹ Musical performance was dogged, provocative, and emotive. It is unsurprising that its performance often coincided with violence. Equally, it is clear that isolated instances of singing ‘The Sash’ did not mean that the movement was using music to reach out to unionists in any meaningful sense. Its performances played into existing disputes, specifically disparaging unionist organisations and challenging their territorial claims.

The Northern Irish government did not respond specifically to civil rights music, but often banned or rerouted marches with the aim of preventing violence, especially where unionists planned counter-demonstrations.¹⁷² This indirectly restricted many musical protests, though the arrest and trial of those defying bans provided new sites of government oppression (courts) and thus alternative spaces for defiant musical

¹⁶⁸ PRONI HA/32/2/28.

¹⁶⁹ *Sunday*, 24th Nov. 1968.

¹⁷⁰ QUBA, STE Days 6-10, MS 33/2/2.

¹⁷¹ QUBA, STE Days 6-10, MS 33/2/2.

¹⁷² PRONI, ‘Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act’, CAB/9/B/83/4.

performances. In December 1968, protesters in Derry sang ‘civil rights songs’ and the ‘Soldier’s Song’ outside a court where 46 defendants appeared on charges arising from civil rights demonstrations. ‘The singing and chanting of the crowd outside’ reported the *Irish Press*, ‘could be heard in the court for most of the day.’¹⁷³ This combination of nationalist and civil rights songs demonstrated that the musical language of the protest was a product both of international movements and a nationalist context.

The Nationalist Party leadership reacted slowly to the civil rights movement.¹⁷⁴ In early 1967, nationalists had debated whether members should stand for ‘God Save the Queen’ in Parliament. The party leader, Eddie McAteer, concluded that members should act according to their own conscience. For the *Irish Independent*, this focus on self-indulgent symbolism epitomised Nationalist irrelevance. The newspaper stated that the ‘inability to agree on royalty-anthem issues is matched by the failure of nationalists... to hammer out the positive policies they need to replace the purely negative ones that have served them for so long’.¹⁷⁵ In 1969, the independent nationalist John Hume defeated Eddie McAteer in the Foyle constituency, largely thanks to his more successful appropriation of ‘civil rights slogans, songs, emblems and colours’.¹⁷⁶ Eventually, Nationalists responded by associating themselves with civil rights culture. Nationalists in Stormont adopted the music and rituals of civil rights protest when they sat on the floor during a debate in March 1969 and sang ‘We Shall Overcome’.¹⁷⁷ These activities appropriated civil rights into a nationalist cause. A Hibernian statement in April asserted

¹⁷³ *Press*, 5th Dec. 1968.

¹⁷⁴ S. Prince and G. Warner, *Belfast and Derry in Revolt: A New History of the Start of the Troubles* (Newbridge, 2012), pp. 86-88.

¹⁷⁵ *Independent*, 5th Jun. 1967.

¹⁷⁶ Prince and Warner, *Belfast and Derry in Revolt*, pp. 167-169.

¹⁷⁷ *Press*, 21st Mar. 1969.

their long-term opposition to partition and discrimination, expressed support for civil rights and concluded that with ‘friendship, unity and true Christian charity, we shall overcome’.¹⁷⁸ They thus linked reform with religion and partition, and appropriated ‘we shall overcome’ to position Irish unity as an integral aim of the civil rights movement.

Republicans were also slow to incorporate civil rights music, preferring more formulaic commemorations of nationalist history, but as the protest movement grew Republicans increasingly sought to appropriate its music. In 1967, Sinn Féin and the Republican Clubs instigated celebrations of the Fenian Rising centenary, utilising bands and parades to ‘promote the restoration of the Irish language and Irish culture’.¹⁷⁹ They also sought political capital from the reinternment in Ireland of the bodies of Peter Barnes and John McCormack (executed in Britain in 1940) in July 1969. Multiple bands played ‘martial tunes’ with ‘drums muffled’ as the coffins were carried through Dublin. The ceremonies concluded with the Last Post.¹⁸⁰ These rituals located the men in a tradition of nationalist martyrs and legitimate military representatives. Newspapers reported that McCormack whistled the ‘Soldier’s Song’ as he ‘marched bravely to the scaffold’. The situation, the association with nationalist music and the term ‘scaffold’ all recalled the Manchester Martyrs and ‘God Save Ireland’.¹⁸¹ By 1969, Republicans were using such events to appropriate the civil rights movement. At a Sinn Féin Easter Rising commemoration in Carrickmore in April 1969, bands played the ‘Soldier’s Song’ and the Last Post before speakers declared their ‘continuing support for the civil rights movement’.¹⁸² In August, a Sinn Féin rally in Dublin saw 2,500 demonstrators outside

¹⁷⁸ *Ulster*, 26th Apr. 1969.

¹⁷⁹ PRONI, ‘Banning of Republican Clubs and Centenary of the Fenian Rising’, CAB/9/B/304/1.

¹⁸⁰ *Press*, 7th Jul. 1969; *Westmeath*, 12th Jul. 1969.

¹⁸¹ *Sligo*, 22nd Nov. 1968.

¹⁸² *Ulster*, 12th Apr. 1969.

the British embassy sing “‘A Nation Once Again” and other patriotic ballads... to express solidarity with the citizens of Derry’.¹⁸³ These were limited gestures, but indicated that Republicans could co-opt civil rights music into their own narratives.

To evaluate music’s role in the civil rights movement, it is fruitful to return to Dominic Behan’s critique of nationalism in ‘The Patriot Game’. Clearly, Northern Irish politics had expanded beyond one-dimensional, nostalgic nationalism. By incorporating gospel, protest song, popular music and new methods of transmission and performance (radio, sit-ins etc.), the civil rights movement demonstrated that it was a product of an international movement. Nevertheless, it operated in a cultural and political context created by ongoing nationalist conflict. Thus, as the movement expanded protesters increasingly used nationalist songs, deliberately antagonised unionists, and challenged unionist political space. When nationalists and Republicans sought to appropriate civil rights music, they did so with the advantage that the musical cultures of civil rights and nationalism already frequently interacted.

¹⁸³ *Press*, 14th Aug. 1969.

III

‘Ireland for the Irish, we shall not be moved’: Music and the Troubles

The British government deployed troops in 1969 with the intention of reducing violence. Instead, inept methods and poor intelligence encouraged an IRA resurgence. In 1970, the remnants of the Nationalist Party combined with independent nationalists and various socialist MPs to form the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). In the same year, Sinn Féin and the IRA both split into Official and Provisional wings in a dispute over whether to continue abstaining from the Dáil. The Officials called a ceasefire in 1972 and focused on socialist politics. The more traditionally Republican Provisionals continued their military campaign. In August 1971, the government introduced internment, but it became a propaganda victory for Republicans after widespread protests and reports of torture.¹⁸⁴ In 1972, on what became known as ‘Bloody Sunday’, troops fired upon Catholic protesters, killing fourteen and permanently undermining the army’s reputation. Stormont was suspended, and the powers of the Northern Irish executive were transferred to the Northern Ireland Secretary in London.¹⁸⁵ While the reorganised constitutional movement largely avoided rebel songs after the outbreak of violence, for Republican organisations the escalating conflict stimulated new material and performances. As this section argues, ideals of Republicanism, civil rights and cultural nationalism did not inevitably blend into one another. Rather, Republicans deliberately cultivated music that conflated them, romanticising and benefitting their movement.

¹⁸⁴ M. Mulholland, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland’s Troubled History* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 95-96.

¹⁸⁵ Northern Ireland Office Papers (henceforth NIO), CJ/4/1004.

Republicans drew upon a wide variety of songs, demonstrating the range of causes that they claimed to represent. Older nationalist ballads were one source. Republican publications in 1972 included ‘A Nation Once Again’, ‘The Rising of the Moon’, the ‘Soldier’s Song’, and ‘Sean South of Garryowen’, engaging with over a century of nationalist song.¹⁸⁶ In doing so, the Provisionals claimed the legacy of these movements. To these they added civil rights songs. A 1970 recording of ‘We Shall Not be Moved’ by folksinger Owen McDonagh proclaimed ‘We want more jobs and houses,/We shall not be moved’, ‘One man, one vote,/We shall not be moved’, and crucially ‘Ireland for the Irish,/We shall not be moved’.¹⁸⁷ For Republicans and sympathetic songwriters, therefore, nationalist history, civil rights, and contemporary struggle formed one continuous narrative. Both the Official and Provisional wings also used new, original compositions, which were usually no less nationalistic. ‘The Lament of Joe McCann’, issued by the Republican Clubs (associated with the Officials) in 1972, mourned one of their activists killed by the RUC. The song celebrated his ‘battle against the British army’ for civil rights causes (‘housing, jobs, and unemployment’) and socialist ideals (‘the wealth belongs to only one class, the workers of Ireland’). Tonic and dominant chords accompanying his name underline the praise of McCann, while a rousing perfect cadence emphasises how he ‘died for me and you’.¹⁸⁸ The Men of No Property – a folk band – were members of the Official movement and claimed to have been actively involved in ‘the struggle’. They used pseudonyms for this reason. They also purported to exemplify a new departure by insisting that ‘all Irish rebel songs were not written 50 years ago’. On *This is Free Belfast* (1971), they positioned the Officials as the legitimate representatives of nationalism, socialism and civil rights. Their name

¹⁸⁶ *Ireland: A Nation Once Again* (Vermont, 1972); *Songs of Resistance*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁸⁷ O. McDonagh, ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’, *Songs of Irish Civil Rights* (1970).

¹⁸⁸ *The Lament of Joe McCann* (San Francisco, 1972).

itself quoted Wolfe Tone. The title of the song ‘Craig’s Dragoons’ refers to Davis’s ‘Clare’s Dragoons’, and the lyrics state ‘croppies won’t lie down’, referring to ‘Croppies Lie Down’, an Orange song on suppressing the 1798 rebellion. It is set to the tune of another Orange song, ‘Dolly’s Brae’, thus appropriating and claiming authority over unionist culture. ‘The Great Eel Robbery’ describes a ‘great monopoly’ ruining a fisherman’s livelihood. The ‘Ballad of Danny O’Hagan’, finally, laments the British response to peaceful protests (‘They used more bloody gas/Than used on the Jews’).¹⁸⁹ In these songs, the Officials celebrated 1798, positioned their struggle as a natural progression of the civil rights movement, and denigrated Britain, unionists, and business. Their derogatory attitude to unionists was representative. Both movements claimed to be non-sectarian on the basis that their ideologies were inclusive and non-Catholic (one Provisional songbook, *Orange and Green Ballads*, included both Orange and nationalist songs).¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, this was pitched at an almost imaginary, ideal Protestant. Their attitude to actual Northern Irish Protestants was less welcoming. The Men of No Property’s ‘Ballad of Carrick Hill’ describes an Orange parade at which the ‘drums made a terrible din’. The ‘residents fought so bravely’ and ‘Carrick Hill was all covered in red,/Larry Deighton was hiring out handcarts,/For the Orangemen to take home their dead’.¹⁹¹ There were, therefore, significantly different attitudes towards the imagined Protestant working-class, and towards actual Protestants encountered in the Orange Order.

Like those by the Officials, songs by active Provisionals laid claim to the nationalist heritage. Many were published in *An Phoblacht*, including by Provisionals serving

¹⁸⁹ Men of No Property, *This is Free Belfast!* (New York, 1971).

¹⁹⁰ *Orange and Green Ballads* (Dungarden, n.d.).

¹⁹¹ *Free Belfast*.

prison sentences.¹⁹² In October 1971, the newspaper printed ‘Victory Song’ to the tune of ‘Sean South of Garryowen’. The updated version praised the Provisionals in place of Sean South.

The British send their quisling Scots, their commandoes and marines,
Their wet-trained paratroopers and heavy-armoured teams,
They brought their best from Germany and lands beyond the sea,
But Belfast’s Provisional Army, alone brought victory.¹⁹³

The lyrics emphasise the foreign origins of British troops (‘quisling Scots’ who betray their Irish Celtic compatriots), in contrast to the local Provisionals, who belong to Belfast. In music, the Officials and the Provisionals asserted their competing claims to nationalist history and civil rights protest.

Republican performance rituals reinforced their appropriation of nationalist and civil rights traditions. SDLP founding member John Hume often associated himself with musical culture, including appearances at festivals where ballads were performed and protests where he sang civil rights songs.¹⁹⁴ However, the SDLP did not participate in parades, nor did it use Republican music, while the Hibernians imposed a voluntary ban on parading between 1971 and 1975.¹⁹⁵ Republican events, however, became more frequent. Protests with communal singing, parades and commemorations created striking displays, aided by electronic amplification (a protest in Fermanagh in January 1972, for example, played music over a public address system).¹⁹⁶ This attracted publicity and conveyed legitimacy and historical precedent. In October 1971,

¹⁹² *Phoblacht*, Oct. 1971.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Examiner*, 4th May 1971; *Independent*, 19th Aug. 1971.

¹⁹⁵ Jarman, *Material Conflicts*, pp. 137-139, 204.

¹⁹⁶ *Press*, 24th Jan. 1972.

Republican Club protesters sang ‘We Shall Overcome’ in Newry.¹⁹⁷ Both the Officials and Provisionals held Easter Rising commemorations with bands annually.¹⁹⁸ The Provisionals organised the largest and most frequent events.¹⁹⁹ Both wings held almost identical Wolfe Tone commemorations on the same day in 1970, demonstrating the extent to which they competed over the same symbols. At these commemorations, they mimicked army musical rituals by playing the Last Post and the Reveille.²⁰⁰ These rituals represented their cause as that of a legitimate national army. In their newspaper, the Provisionals also located events in a nationalist context by quoting songs. Referencing the lyrics of ‘Kevin Barry’, *An Phoblacht* employed the headline ‘Another Murder for the Crown’ in stories about deaths inflicted by the British army.²⁰¹ By playing the national anthem to conclude their Ard Fheis each year, moreover, they conveyed that they (rather than governing parties in the Republic) represented the true Irish Republic.²⁰²

In some instances, Republicans used music to assert their commitment to gender equality. The Men of No Property, notably, later rebranded as The People of No Property.²⁰³ Nevertheless, they also employed conventional celebrations of masculinity. ‘Freedom’s Sons’ called on ‘brave men’ to ‘fight and die’.²⁰⁴ In ‘The Lid of My Granny’s Bin’ the female protagonist was a comic figure, a grandmother fighting British soldiers:

¹⁹⁷ *Independent*, 14th Oct. 1971.

¹⁹⁸ M. McLeery, *Operation Demetrius and its Aftermath* (Manchester, 2015), p. 110.

¹⁹⁹ *Phoblacht*, Apr. 1970.

²⁰⁰ *Press*, 15th Jun. 1970.

²⁰¹ *Phoblacht*, Jun. 1970.

²⁰² *Independent*, 25th Oct. 1971.

²⁰³ *The Spirit of Freedom* (London, 1982).

²⁰⁴ *Songs of Resistance*, p. 11.

A soldier came right up the stairs, a rifle in his hand
 She kicked him with her button boots along the hall she ran,
 Up and stepped another one, some medal for to win,
 But all he got, right in the gob, was the lid of my Granny's bin.²⁰⁵

The song employs repetitive, four beat phrases and a simple rhythm with a strong first beat, reinforcing the song's humour. Although the 'Granny' is the heroine, the fact that she is a woman, and an elderly woman, is used primarily to emasculate the soldiers. Aspirations to gender equality, therefore, did not preclude constructions of femininity as weakness, and rebellion as masculinity.

Republicans also courted cultural nationalism through music. Several songs printed in *An Phoblacht* were in Irish.²⁰⁶ Republicans helped to organise a fleadh in Catholic areas of Belfast in 1970.²⁰⁷ This appears to have been as much about community relations as claiming Ireland's heritage. In 1972, the IRA in Ballymurphy announced that it had taken over the administration of law and order in the area and that a fleadh would be held that evening for the entertainment of residents.²⁰⁸ Viewed in conjunction with the sympathy for Republicanism expressed by Comhaltas (detailed in Chapter Three), it is clear that Republicans made considerable effort to convey that Ireland had a separate culture to what they saw as the occupying British power. Irish music emblematised that difference. By claiming to represent it, they positioned their cause as one not motivated solely by political ideals, but also cultural necessity. They represented a national culture, not only a political agenda.

²⁰⁵ *Songs from the Barricades* (Belfast, 1974).

²⁰⁶ *Phoblacht*, 14th Jul. 1974.

²⁰⁷ *Independent*, 2nd May 1970.

²⁰⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office Papers (henceforth FCO)/87/3.

Just as Republican music incorporated civil rights, nationalism, cultural revival, and nominal non-sectarianism into a single narrative, it also placed that narrative within a context of international anti-establishment politics. Nuclear disarmament was a useful target. Republicans co-opted the campaign by printing songs prophesying nuclear apocalypse such as ‘The Sun is Burning’.²⁰⁹ They also sought and often received explicit support from overseas. In January 1971, the Connolly Association, an international Irish Republican organisation, held a concert in New Zealand with ‘rebel songs’ in support of the ‘re-unification of all Ireland’ to ‘raise funds for the IRA... guns and bullets, you know, what the IRA does’.²¹⁰ In America, by 1972 the Irish Northern Aid Committee (Noraid), associated with the Provisionals, was organising ‘more dances, concerts, lectures and fund raising events of one kind or another... than ever before’.²¹¹ The Officials organised ‘anti-imperialist festivals’ and invited foreign representatives. In Belfast in 1971, they played the ‘Internationale’ and the ‘Soldier’s Song’ before their leader, Tomas Mac Giolla, gave an address.²¹² As intelligence reports noted, these efforts represented a ‘direct competition’ between the two wings for ‘international recognition’ as Ireland’s principal resistance movement.²¹³

Government responses to violence stimulated music sympathetic to Republicanism. When the government introduced internment, folk group The Barleycorn recorded ‘The Men Behind the Wire’.²¹⁴ The song expresses support for the interned ‘men behind the wire’ by deploying familial language (‘sons’, ‘crying children’, ‘fathers’, ‘mothers’). It depicts the British military with its ‘tanks and guns’ as ‘marauding’ and violent

²⁰⁹ *Sing Our Own Song: Workers’ Party Youth Songbook* (Dublin, 1987), p. 26.

²¹⁰ FCO/33/1593.

²¹¹ *Evening*, 24th Mar. 1972.

²¹² *Sunday*, 4th Aug. 1971.

²¹³ NIO, CJ/4/1224.

²¹⁴ *Independent*, 15th Dec. 1971.

(‘watched the blood pour from their heads’), and condemns imprisonment without ‘judge or jury’ for assuming ‘being Irish means they’re guilty’. The final verse encourages listeners to support the Republican cause.

Proudly march behind our banner,
 Firmly stand behind our men,
 We will have them free to help us,
 Build a nation once again,
 On the people step together,
 Proudly, firmly on our way,
 Never fear and never falter,
 Till the boys come home to stay.²¹⁵

A 4/4 marching rhythm underlines the song’s militaristic implications, while tonic and dominant chords reinforce the inspiring lyrics. The masculine prisoners (‘our men’, ‘the boys’) are the people’s nationalist representatives, implied in quotations from ‘Step Together’ and ‘A Nation Once Again’. In music, it was easier to smooth over tensions in this message. The internees were simultaneously innocent and the soldiers who would make Ireland ‘a nation once again’. It was also an accessible form of defiance for those not directly involved. The arrest of the song’s lyricist and guitarist Pat McGuigan on 14 December 1971 helped it to number one in Ireland.²¹⁶ It remained in the charts for 40 weeks and sold 150,000 copies by the end of 1972.²¹⁷ Irish radio did not play the song when it first entered the charts. RTÉ denied having banned it; the broadcaster did not play the song, a spokesperson said, because it was not ‘appropriate’ in genre or content for pop music programmes.²¹⁸ RTÉ insisted that the song would ‘find a place’ in their programmes elsewhere.²¹⁹ McGuigan’s wife stated that a police search of their

²¹⁵ The Barleycorn, *Men Behind the Wire* (1971).

²¹⁶ *Independent*, 15th Dec. 1971.

²¹⁷ The Irish Charts, ‘Men Behind the Wire’, <http://www.irishcharts.ie/search/placement> (4th Apr. 2017); *Donegal*, 27th Jan. 1973.

²¹⁸ *Press*, 7th Jan. 1972.

²¹⁹ *Press*, 8th Jan. 1972.

house found nothing and that they threatened him during questioning about his knowledge of the IRA ('he has none', she insisted).²²⁰ McGuigan was released in February, and no evidence emerged that he had IRA connections.²²¹ Thereafter, however, the Barleycorn played concerts supporting IRA prisoners and their dependants.²²² 'Men behind the wire' became a common shorthand to describe internees.²²³ Most importantly, Republicans incorporated it into their performances, particularly anti-internment protests.²²⁴ Music provided a medium through which musicians, activists and audiences could express sympathy for internees and romanticise Republicanism. In this, they were encouraged by the response of government and broadcasters, which made listening to the song a political act in its own right.

Bloody Sunday similarly inspired music that was sympathetic to unification and condemnatory of government. In February, Beatles singer Paul McCartney recorded 'Give Ireland Back to the Irish'. McCartney holds Britain wholly accountable for forcing Republicans to use violence, seemingly releasing the IRA from responsibility ('Give Ireland back to the Irish/Don't make them have to take it away').²²⁵ RTÉ played the record, but the BBC and Radio Luxembourg refused, the former because 'the lyrics adopt a definite standpoint on the Northern Ireland situation and are therefore clearly politically controversial', the latter because the song was 'politically biased'. The Independent Television Authority also refused to advertise it.²²⁶ Like 'Men Behind the Wire', the ban appeared to boost the song's sales. It reached number one in Ireland and

²²⁰ *Independent*, 20th Dec. 1971.

²²¹ *Independent*, 25th Feb. 1972.

²²² *Sunday*, 17th Mar. 1974; *Phoblacht*, 13th Dec. 1980.

²²³ *Spirit of Freedom*; *Press*, 11th Apr. 1973.

²²⁴ *Press*, 24th Jan. 1972.

²²⁵ *Wings*, *Give Ireland Back to the Irish* (1972).

²²⁶ *Press*, 11th Feb. 1972; *Evening*, 17th Feb. 1972.

sixteen in the UK, indicating the level of sympathy for a united Ireland in both countries.²²⁷ Similarly, John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 'Sunday Bloody Sunday', released in June, laments the 'cries of thirteen martyrs' and delegitimises the unionist majority ('You claim to be majority/Well you know that it's a lie/You're really a minority/On the sweet emerald isle').²²⁸ It does not appear to have been banned by British and Irish broadcasters. Lennon donated the proceeds to the Republican-supporting National Association of Irish Freedom.²²⁹ The Provisionals subsequently reproduced the song in their publications.²³⁰ That the singers from The Beatles (both of whom had Irish ancestry) responded to Bloody Sunday within months in a manner critical of the government and the union is suggestive of the extent to which events in Northern Ireland were, in 1972, still being associated with the 'long 1968'. That the Provisionals appropriated Lennon's song, moreover, indicates the enthusiasm with which they embraced that narrative.

Musical culture's influence on paramilitaries is indicated in their written and oral accounts. When social scientist Rogelio Alonso interviewed former rebels, they cited Republican ballads as an 'emotional' and 'romantic' influence on naïve young minds.²³¹ Based on these accounts, Alonso concludes that recruits were 'impressionable and emotionally immature'.²³² In his memoir, former IRA member Shane O'Doherty conveys a similar narrative. He believed 'traditional and folksy music' commemorating

²²⁷ The Irish Charts, 'Give Ireland Back to the Irish', <http://www.irishcharts.ie/search/placement> (3rd Nov. 2015); Official Charts Archive, 'Give Ireland Back to the Irish', <http://www.officialcharts.com/search/singles/give%20ireland%20back/> (3rd Nov. 2015).

²²⁸ J. Lennon and Y. Ono, 'Sunday Bloody Sunday', *Some Time In New York City* (1972).

²²⁹ *Press*, 27th Apr. 1972.

²³⁰ *Songs of Resistance*, p. 22.

²³¹ R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle* (London, 2007), pp. 12, 79.

²³² *Ibid.* p. 4.

1916 had influenced him during his youth.²³³ His earliest Republican activities were Fianna parades.²³⁴ O'Doherty, who later apologised for his paramilitary actions, attributed these influences to youthful ignorance.²³⁵ In all instances, these are accounts of middle-aged activists recalling their teenage years, some regretfully, and so it is unsurprising that they identified romantic nationalist music as a trigger for simplistic political viewpoints. The motivations that led such individuals to become revolutionaries may have been more complex, but the contemporary material suggests that musical performances were at least a productive means of recruitment and participation. The Fianna Éireann, through which many like O'Doherty became enrolled, promoted bands as a means of recruiting.²³⁶ As was consistently the case in nationalist groups, paramilitary music was most prominent in prison. Francie McGuigan, a Republican prisoner who escaped from Long Kesh prison in 1972, described 'Legion of the Rearguard' as one of 'the most popular' songs in the camp, but the prisoners altered the line 'de Valera leads you' to 'de Valera deceived you'.²³⁷ They thus robbed Fianna Fáil of its nationalist heritage, and contextualised their own imprisonment in an ongoing fight against the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Prisoners were also assisted by advances in recording equipment that made it possible for songs to be taped surreptitiously. Recordings of internees singing 'We Shall Overcome', 'The Boys of the Old Brigade' and 'Óró, sé do bheatha' were sold in 1972.²³⁸ By employing music and modern methods prisoners defied prison restrictions to communicate with audiences outside.

²³³ S. O'Doherty, *The Volunteer: A Former IRA Man's True Story* (London, 1993), p. 49.

²³⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 60, 68.

²³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 200.

²³⁶ B. Holland, *A Short History of the Fianna Éireann* (Dublin, 1988).

²³⁷ *Evening*, 25th Nov. 1972.

²³⁸ *Independent*, 31st Mar. 1972.

There had been mixed feelings in some parts of the civil rights movement about the correct place of nationalist musical culture, but upon the spread of violence Republican groups showed no such reticence. Republicans used (and competed over) the music of historical nationalism, international civil rights, cultural nationalism and contemporary Republicanism precisely so that they could blur the boundaries between them. They were successful in doing so, as evidenced by the compositions of Republican sympathisers up to and including British pop stars. In this, they were readily assisted by the government and security forces, whose policy decisions (internment) and ill-discipline (Bloody Sunday) inspired public anger. That anger found an outlet in music and when government and broadcasters responded with arrests and censorship, they created an easily accessible means through which the public could express defiance and disapproval. Music therefore provides clear insights into how government policy reinforced and created sympathy for resurgent Republicanism.

5

Dance and Nationalism, 1848-1972**I****Inventing the Irish Dancer, 1848-1923**

The framework thus far applied to music can apply equally to dance. However, in the absence of lyrics, dances are less likely than songs to make explicit political points to wide audiences not necessarily conversant in the art form. Instead, dance interacts with music and conveys meaning through the language of the body. The enthusiasm for folk music across nineteenth-century Europe applied equally to dance, which revivalists believed could ‘strike deep into the foundations of our national feelings and expression’.¹ Just as Natasha instinctively finds herself able to dance Russian folkdances in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, cultural revivalists in various countries believed that dance culture contained the ‘unseen threads of native sensibility’.² In Ireland, ballroom dances – the foxtrotⁱ, waltzⁱⁱ – were for many evidence of Anglicisation as much as music hall. The body (particularly the female body) became a potent subject of an explicitly national debate framed by the competing interests of Catholicism and nationalism, especially after the formation of the Gaelic League in 1893. As this section explains, dance became a fundamental medium through which to express Irish nationality, and an important adjunct to the national movement. The uses of dance were multiple, and not always complementary. Nonetheless by the end of the

¹ V. Gammon, “‘Many Useful Lessons’: Cecil Sharp, Education and the Folkdance Revival, 1899-1924’, *Cultural and Social History*, 5 (1) (2008), p. 79.

² Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*, p. xxvi.

revolutionary period there was a clear if inconsistent notion of what did and did not constitute Irish dance.

That national traditions are invented has been restated with such frequency as to become a truism.³ The raw materials from which Irish dance was constructed in the nineteenth century were readily accessible. As folklorist Brendan Breathnach establishes, certain dances were already associated with the country. Travellers to Ireland cited the jigⁱⁱⁱ as particularly popular. Breathnach demonstrates that these were often foreign imports. The ‘Rinnce Fada’, a double jig,^{iv} was derived from an English dance. Quadrilles^v were introduced from France by Irish soldiers after the Napoleonic Wars.⁴ Despite their foreign origins, the titles of these dances gave them an Irish character. Topographical references (‘The Limerick Lasses’), or historical themes (‘Rory O’More’) meant that, while not nationalistic, they conveyed an explicit sense of place.⁵ Writers described these ‘Irish dances’ as rural products of the ‘Irish peasantry’, but their popularity and novelty was increasingly felt in urban and bourgeois settings, particularly given the social appeal of group dances.⁶ By the mid-nineteenth century, writers were conceptualising these dances as emblems of national character. In his *Collection of the Dance Music of Ireland*, R. M. Levey described ‘the antiquity’ and ‘national characteristics’ of his jigs, reels^{vi} and hornpipes^{vii} as preserving an ancient and rural Irish culture, whatever their foreign ancestry. ‘The Irish character’ he wrote, ‘is as truly reflected in these dance tunes, as in their more serious melodies, it would be a great national loss were they allowed to die through the want of a little industry’.⁷ Levey

³ E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁴ B. Breathnach, *Dancing in Ireland* (Miltown-Malbay, 1983), pp. 22-28.

⁵ R. M. Levey, *A Collection of the Dance Music of Ireland Consisting of Upwards of One Hundred National Jigs, Reels, and Hornpipes &c.* (London, c. 1858); *Freeman’s*, 8th Nov. 1839.

⁶ *Nation*, 12th Jul. 1845; *Nation*, 23rd Aug. 1845.

⁷ Levey, *Collection*.

provides an early example of themes that came to dominate the discussion: through dance the national character could be located, defined and preserved.

Dancing's social appeal gave it added impetus. Groups seeking public support and funds, for instance Temperance societies, used dances towards those ends.⁸ However, for the Catholic Church the enjoyment that (unmarried) couples derived from the bodily movements and physical contact of dancing was concerning, especially the role of the female body in that enjoyment. As early as 1670, a Cork priest complained:

Women dancers burn with fire of lust. We see that the well-trained hound stays indoors when the lapdogs of the town are barking and yelping. So should the well reared and respectable woman remain inside the day everybody is dancing and hopping around the piper, bellower of the devil.⁹

Misogyny and Catholicism made a common combination regarding dancing. Reflecting on the growth of ballroom dancing in 1873, the Right Rev. Dr Furlong wrote:

It is impossible not to regard them as offensive to Christian modesty and fraught with danger. The attitudes and movements in these dances are manifestly incompatible with a due regard for propriety and decorum... On such occasions, it seems, a style of ballroom dress is witnessed that is painfully indelicate. That modest young lady [sic] should appear in such a denuded state in the bosom of her family is indeed surprising, but that in such a plight she should expose herself to the gaze of the miscellaneous gatherings of a ballroom, is simply inconceivable.¹⁰

Furlong banned those under his jurisdiction from partaking in such dances. Common to both responses, though two centuries apart, was the association between dancing and

⁸ *Freeman's*, 28th May 1841.

⁹ Breathnach, *Dancing*, p. 36.

¹⁰ *Examiner*, 27th Feb. 1873.

sex. Men are rarely mentioned, but the movements and exposure of female bodies undermined 'Christian modesty'. Furlong also condemned the 'foreign importation' of the dances he described. While not fully articulated, the particular immorality of perceived 'foreign' dances provided an identification that developed considerably in subsequent years.

Nationalists only employed dance before the formation of the Gaelic League to a limited extent. Dances were common at St Patrick's Day celebrations, but nationalists did not use them politically with the frequency of songs. The Fenian Mark Ryan claimed that his childhood included a consciously Irish dancing culture in which he developed his national awareness.¹¹ He wrote his account, which is not typical of his compatriots, after the formation of the Gaelic League, in which he actively participated. He therefore had ex post facto knowledge of the dances that the League cultivated and his narrative should not be taken as representative.¹² The Parliamentary Party organised dances, but more often it was the more energetic and radical groups with which constitutional nationalism was associated that employed dance.¹³ *The Land League Quadrilles* provide a notable example. They conveyed their political message through their titles, including 'The Coercion Gallop' (referring to the government's clampdown on the Land War), 'The Davitt Mazurka' (named for Michael Davitt) and 'Griffith's Valuation'. The latter was the only example that employed more than the title in its political message, instructing participants to stop and chant 'we'll pay no rent but Griffith's valuation', referring to land valuations carried out between 1848 and 1864.¹⁴ It was published by Christopher Browne, a Dublin piano retailer, and composed by

¹¹ Ryan, *Fenian*, p. 10.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 199.

¹³ *Examiner*, 2nd Jan. 1889.

¹⁴ *Nation*, 30th Apr. 1881.

Charles MacCarthy. They dedicated the book to Anna Parnell of the more radical Ladies' Land League, with her permission, and donated half the profits to her organisation.¹⁵ The book appears to have been taken quite seriously, but it was a rare example. Nationalist dances were not as ubiquitous as nationalist songs.

Dances rarely conveyed political narratives, but nationalist organisations used their social appeal to gather activists and disseminate political ideas. The National Foresters, the Amnesty Association, and the Young Ireland Society all organised dances in Ireland and England.¹⁶ At a Young Ireland Society dance in Dundalk, participants toasted 'Ireland a Nation' at the close of proceedings.¹⁷ The Ancient Order of Hibernians used dances regularly, especially after the National Secretary, J. D. Nugent, instructed branches to organise céilidhe (social gatherings for Irish dancing) to attract members in the *Hibernian Journal* in 1907.¹⁸ Irish revivalism encouraged these efforts. In Donegal in May 1910, the speaker at a dance organised by the United Irish League stated that the Hibernians were 'always ready and willing' to ensure that 'English and foreign dances were... suppressed and superseded by Irish entertainments'.¹⁹ Hibernians used these gatherings to convey political messages. The Tipperary Hibernians, for example, hosted their second 'annual home rule dance' in February 1915.²⁰

By the time the Hibernians recognised 'Irish' dancing's potential, the Gaelic League was already synonymous with it, most importantly through céilidhe. In contrast to later

¹⁵ *Freeman's*, 3rd May 1881.

¹⁶ *Sentinel*, 18th Mar. 1893.

¹⁷ *Dundalk Democrat* (henceforth *Dundalk*), 19th Jan. 1891.

¹⁸ *Hibernian*, Oct. 1907.

¹⁹ *Donegal*, 12th Feb. 1910.

²⁰ *Examiner*, 20th Feb. 1915.

perceptions, the céilidh was distinctly cosmopolitan. It was imported from Scotland, via the London Gaelic League. The London branch held its first céilidh in January 1897 and the format rapidly spread after coverage in *An Claidheamh Soluis*.²¹ Future céilidhe included Scottish, Welsh, Manx, Breton and Irish dances.²² Demonstrations helped to disseminate dances including reels, jigs and hornpipes. The self-styled ‘Professor’ Reidy, a former London policeman, featured often, as did ‘champion step dancer’ Willis Murray.²³ By 1914, the Dublin Gaelic League had established a ‘National School of Irish Dancing’ which ran classes and taught new dances.²⁴ Individual branches organised dances to celebrate St Patrick’s Day and the Samhain festival (Celtic New Year).²⁵ The social interaction that céilidhe encouraged was vital. Dances such as the ‘High Caul Cap’,^{viii} ‘Bridge of Athlone’^{ix} and ‘Walls of Limerick’^x were simple and interactive. C. S. Andrews recalled that these dances ‘being the easiest, were the favourites’.²⁶ Rosamund Jacob made similar observations, describing the ‘Siege of Ennis’^{xi} as ‘very good and simple’.²⁷ She commented fondly on the group coordination required, on her enjoyment of arranging dances with friends and her (regular) plans to attend local céilidhe.²⁸ For Gaelic League members, dances were sociable and appealing.

The League encouraged competitive dancing at féiseanna and the Oireachtas.²⁹ The GAA also held competitions in dances such as the reel and the hornpipe.³⁰ Competitions

²¹ *Nation*, 23rd Jan. 1897; *Claidheamh*, 8th Apr. 1899.

²² *Nation*, 1st May 1897.

²³ *Claidheamh*, 22nd Jul. 1899.

²⁴ *Claidheamh*, 25th Apr. 1914.

²⁵ *Claidheamh*, 1st Apr. 1899; *Donegal*, 7th Nov. 1903.

²⁶ Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p. 104.

²⁷ NLI, RJD, 6th Jan. 1923, MS 32,582/43.

²⁸ NLI, RJD, 4th Jan. 1901, MS 32,582/4; NLI, RJD, 6th Jan. 1912, MS 32,582/20.

²⁹ *Claidheamh*, 18th Mar. 1899; *Claidheamh*, 8th Apr. 1899.

³⁰ *Munster*, 29th Oct. 1887; *Examiner*, 2nd Jul. 1887.

were part of the wider culture of revival, notably in music, but also language recitation and sport. Dancing competitions were among the most popular. Gaelic League co-founder Eoin MacNeill described a féis in Glenariff: ‘It was impossible to get a look at the dancing unless perhaps you came there the night before, for from ten o’clock till six the platform was surrounded by a dense crowd’.³¹ Competition was vital to this popularity. Branches derived considerable pride from their members’ success. The Limerick branch reported in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in June 1899 that members were ‘rejoicing’ after one of their number achieved ‘victory in the dancing competitions at the Oireachtas’, not because it was ‘unexpected’ but because he had ‘once more scored against some of the finest dancers in the land’.³² The same pride is evidenced on a familial level. John Devoy, living in America, received a series of buoyant letters from relatives about the dancing exploits of his nieces and nephews and their enthusiasm for prize winning.³³ His nephew, Joe, wrote in September 1909:

The trio that is Eily, Seamus & Jessie Kennedy are going to take part in a competition – a three hand reel^{xii} at St Lawrence & Tooles. If they win there will be silver medals for them! Of course, they are excited!³⁴

The excitement of competition and of winning thus stimulated participation on the part of competitors and families. In his letters to his uncle, Joe Devoy also suggested that competition especially appealed to ‘young people’.³⁵

³¹ UCDA, Eoin MacNeill Papers, LA1/E/11.

³² *Claidheamh*, 17th Jun. 1899.

³³ NLI, JDP, MS 18,004/1/16.

³⁴ NLI, JDP, MS 18,004/1/20.

³⁵ NLI, MS 18,004/1/16.

Social and competitive dancing's popularity benefitted the movement beyond dancing itself, for instance in fundraising.³⁶ Most importantly, advocates hoped dancing would attract 'sympathisers who may not understand Irish', benefitting their priority issue: the language.³⁷ Branches organised language classes and dances on the same evenings with the aim of increasing class attendance.³⁸ Language tests were applied at féiseanna and the Oireachtas that theoretically prevented those who failed to demonstrate a certain standard of Irish from competing in dancing competitions.³⁹ Others did not bar participants based on such tests, but awarded them additional marks if they performed well.⁴⁰ Revivalists thus mobilised dancing's popularity to benefit the language. Dancing similarly aided Irish manufacturing. The League held dances specifically to promote Irish industries, while the Dulhallow and Muskerry féis in 1910 required dancers to wear clothing of Irish manufacture.⁴¹ In 1922, the same féis emblazoned dancing programmes with assurances that they were printed on Irish paper.⁴² Other supposed benefits of dancing were particularly dubious. In 1903, GAA representatives claimed that their dances made Ireland less dull, discouraging emigration to more exciting locations.⁴³ This was optimistic, but it speaks to the perception that dancing contributed to a larger revival movement that was reinvigorating Ireland's national spirit.

The Gaelic League prioritised the language, but its members also articulated definitions of Irish dancing that drew upon, synthesised, and augmented existing attitudes. 'Cottage

³⁶ *Connacht*, 26th Feb. 1910.

³⁷ *Claidheamh*, 3rd Jun. 1899.

³⁸ *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 26th Apr. 1902.

³⁹ *Féis Bhaile Átha Cliath* (Dublin, 1909); *Programme of the Oireachtas* (Dublin, 1904).

⁴⁰ CCCA, Liam Ó Buachella (Banteer) Papers (henceforth LOBP), U203/106.

⁴¹ CCCA, LOBP, U203/106; NLI, JDP, MS 18,004/7.

⁴² CCCA, LOBP, U203/109.

⁴³ *Sentinel*, 28th Nov. 1903.

Céilidhe' scenes depicted jigs and hornpipes in rural settings, emphasising preconceptions of a peasant character.⁴⁴ The most popular dances reinforced their Irish quality with topographical and historical titles. 'Walls of Limerick' and 'Bridge of Athlone' both referred to sieges during the Williamite War (1688-1691), often cited as the end of Gaelic Ireland and the start of an Anglicising colonial age.⁴⁵ The rhetoric in which dances were discussed also placed them in Irish history, contrasting them with more recent imports. In *The Weekly Freeman* in 1902, Gaelic League and Sinn Féin activist Art Ó Briain suggested that 'foreign dances' of the 'Saxon civilisation' posed 'a danger to the permanence of our race'. Their Irish ancestors, he continued, 'would disown their offspring as lost to decency' were they to indulge the immoral French quadrilles instead of jigs and reels. The former originated in the nineteenth century, a 'century of slavery' when the Irish 'gave up all their own customs, dancing included, for their master's way'. In contrast, Irish dances were untainted by colonial masters, and developed the physicality of a strong nation. Children who danced Irish dances, Ó Briain wrote, 'make more progress in strength than all the drugs in the pharmacopoeia'. He continued:

Erect and shapely figure replaces bent and dragging gait. Full eye and rosy cheek and swinging, graceful step, are seen where erstwhile patter and sunken orbs sadly sought for sympathy. And the sound body helps to create soundness of mind.

⁴⁴ NLI, Sydney Czira Papers, MS 18,817/16/7.

⁴⁵ G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'Language, Ideology and National Identity' in J. Cleary and C. Connolly (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 46.

The double jig's faster tempo was particularly stimulating.⁴⁶ The GAA and other nineteenth-century sporting organisations hoped to create physically fit fighting men.⁴⁷ Rebel songs idealised strong, masculine rebels. Likewise, Ó Briain's Irish dances would develop ideal Irishmen, 'manly in muscle' 'as becomes an athletic nation'.⁴⁸

In addition, theorists fused 'traditional' and 'rural' dancing with ideals of Catholic morality that were deeply suspicious of sexuality, especially female. Given the heavy Catholic involvement in the Gaelic League, this is unsurprising.⁴⁹ Ó Briain wrote that 'Irish dancing', unlike 'English' equivalents, encouraged the 'purity of Irish maids' without 'the flirtation dance' and 'frequent hand-clasping' of the ballroom and its 'serpentine twisting'.⁵⁰ For priests, older solo dances were a lesser evil compared to ballroom dances; there was less suggestive physical contact. Thus, they instructed their flocks not to 'hold their partners too tightly', and certainly not 'round the waist English fashion'.⁵¹ To combat the 'demoralising indecencies of the waltz', Irish dancers were to remain 'erect in graceful easy carriage'.⁵² One writer in the *Western People* even criticised four- and eight-hand reels as imports and 'vulgar, characterless romps' that the League had been duped into adopting.⁵³ Gender roles were carefully defined; the male style was more physical, the female graceful and 'modest'. Men and women who copied one another's styles blurred gender boundaries, to their detriment, women becoming 'masculine and aggressive', men 'gintee little scotches' (implying that Scots

⁴⁶ NLI, Art Ó Briain Papers, MS 8436/7.

⁴⁷ M. Cronin, *Sport: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2014), p. 49; M. Cronin, 'Defenders of the Nation? The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish National Identity', *Irish Political Studies* 11 (1) (1996), p. 10.

⁴⁸ NLI, MS 8436/7.

⁴⁹ McMahan, *Grand*, p. 104.

⁵⁰ NLI, MS 8436/7.

⁵¹ *Independent*, 24th Feb. 1922; J. J. Sheehan, *A Guide to Irish Dancing* (London, 1902), p. 48.

⁵² NLI, MS 8436/7.

⁵³ Brennan, *Story*, p. 32.

dances were more feminine than Irish).⁵⁴ This was typical of European folk revivals, including England where Cecil Sharp wrote that female Morris dancers should not dance ‘essentially masculine actions’.⁵⁵

Xenophobia and aspiring asexuality merged with racism in early responses to jazz, introduced to Ireland by former members of the military after the First World War.⁵⁶ Jazz’s syncopated rhythms encouraged unconventional hip and arm movements, with rapid directional changes. One priest, speaking in Connacht, described jazz dances as the ‘thin end of the devil’s wedge’.⁵⁷ These concerns played out in courtrooms as applications for music and dancing licenses were challenged. In Clonmel in November 1919, opponents of a new jazz hall implored the judge to reject the application because jazz encouraged ‘contortions of the body’ and ‘grimaces of a nigger’, having been ‘introduced from Africa’ to America by ‘a nigger who was afterwards lynched’.⁵⁸ Constructions of the immoral, uncivilised African thus supplemented negative aesthetic responses. Such instances were relatively uncommon, but foreshadowed more significant grievances to come.

Gaelic League members, furthermore, carried out attacks on ‘foreign’ dances. Peter Devoy wrote to his uncle describing his efforts for Irish dance:

A crowd of us from Clann na hÉireann went to a soinnín dance in Rathmines the other night to do a little propaganda for Irish dancing as it was announced that every second dance would be an Irish one but the foreigners numbered about six hundred

⁵⁴ NLI, MS 8436/7.

⁵⁵ Gammon, ‘Sharp’, p. 82.

⁵⁶ *Examiner*, 21st Jul. 1919.

⁵⁷ *Connacht*, 20th Dec. 1919.

⁵⁸ *Independent*, 25th Nov. 1919.

while there were only about forty Gaels there. However, we were well organised and succeeded in holding the floor for Irish dancing in one of the ballrooms and the soininns were obliged to crowd into one large hall where they had no room for their waltzing etc., and they made a very poor show in comparison with the Irish dancing.⁵⁹

They thus mitigated the indecencies of the waltz with native dances, to the detriment of compromising ‘soininns’. Nationalist paramilitaries also attacked foreign dances. In August 1919, armed Republicans entered a dance in Cork, tore down decorations and demanded ‘Irish dances’. One of the men returned the following night, but joined in with the ““one step”,^{xiii} the “jazz”, and every other thing that was danced’.⁶⁰ These results were relatively benign, but another incident in the more divisive context of the Civil War was less so. In December 1922, the anti-Treaty IRA raided a dance in Mayo ‘at which the guests had been waltzing’:

The raiders said that they would not tolerate enjoyment of that kind while they were out suffering for their country. They broke up the dance and marched off to Lullymore all the young men of the village who had gathered and forced them to cut a trench across the public road.⁶¹

Their actions suggest that they considered foreign dances a symbol of colonial oppressors and their new Puppet State. Because attendees indulged in foreign dances, the Republicans deemed them legitimate targets.

The consistency with which Gaelic League members adhered to the modest, Irish-speaking definition of the native dancer was limited. Despite efforts to direct dancing’s

⁵⁹ NLI, JDP, MS 18,004/7.

⁶⁰ *Examiner*, 11th Nov. 1919.

⁶¹ *Nenagh*, 16th Dec. 1922.

popularity towards the benefit of the language, many London Gaelic League members attended dances regularly but not Gaelic classes.⁶² Rosamund Jacob observed that dancing competitors at the 1911 Oireachtas had ‘hardly a word of Irish’ despite the language tests.⁶³ The extent to which dancing became standardised was equally queried. The ‘Report of the Commission on Irish Dancing’ at the 1904 Oireachtas found that dancers from Limerick and Dublin had markedly different styles, the latter demonstrating ‘chain movements’ more akin to quadrilles than Irish dancing.⁶⁴ ‘Professor’ Reidy similarly condemned demonstrations in London that included inauthentic foreign movements such as the ‘salmon’s leap’ and ‘drunken man’.⁶⁵ Others indulged in foreign dances explicitly. Rosamund Jacob had no concerns with quadrilles, nor the waltz, demoralising indecencies or otherwise.⁶⁶ Calls to prohibit the waltz in 1904 had seemingly no effect.⁶⁷ In an extreme example, an article in the *Kerryman* in 1911 gave advice to Gaelic League branches experiencing low attendances:

Organise dances, foreign dances. They will appreciate that alright you will find. They’ll flock to them. After a time teach them an Irish figure dance. When they know it, keep it on the programme. Then you have made headway already! When they are acquainted with that figure dance – perfectly, teach them another. When they know it, keep those two on the programme. That is another milestone passed, and keep going on... until such a time as you can run a céilidh all night with native and foreign dances alternately... No man or woman no matter how athletic can stand the continual strain of Irish dances only. And foreign dances on the waltz system must be permitted until such a time as Irish dances are evolved which can be gone through to slower music.⁶⁸

⁶² T. Barclay, *Memoirs and Medleys: The Autobiography of a Bottle Washer* (Coalville, 1995), p. 98.

⁶³ NLI, RJD, 23rd Aug. 1911, MS 32,582/23.

⁶⁴ NLI, MS 8436/7.

⁶⁵ Brennan, *Story*, p. 41.

⁶⁶ NLI, RJD, 17th May 1902, MS 32,582/3; NLI, RJD, 15th Feb. 1912, MS 32,582/20.

⁶⁷ Brennan, *Story*, p. 33.

⁶⁸ *Kerryman*, 30th Dec. 1911.

Few examples make their statements so starkly, but clearly many League members embraced foreign dances without concern, providing they were pursued in Irish contexts.

Notably, the rhetoric of sexual morality was not consistently matched by participants. Young nationalist women like Rosamund Jacob attended dances regularly. For young people aspiring to courtship, the usual male dominance of nationalist groups was undesirable. Kathleen Behan met her first husband at a Gaelic League dance, indicating that flirtatious behaviour was anything but absent.⁶⁹ Certainly, male nationalists described dancing with women as a primary reason for attending dances and céilidhe ('we had not lost our yearning for dance and association with the opposite sex', wrote Patrick Casey on a dance in March 1921).⁷⁰ These were not gatherings of incorruptible sexual morality. Rosamund Jacob described the aesthetic virtues of her male dance partners extensively, for instance in August 1922:

I danced twice and it's a great dance if only you knew it well, though it has lots of repetition – continual whizzing round in couples which I suppose is the charm of it. I never saw my first partner again, he was big, dark, & cheerful but not good looking, & I'm not sure whether my second was Jimmy Miley or not. J. M. was dancing, tall, dark & mild or gentle and handsome when he smiled and very nice when he didn't. Looked as if he had a lot in him.⁷¹

The following day she recorded that Jimmy's brother Willie was 'the beauty of the family', a 'splendid man to look at' and a 'lightning dancer'.⁷² The desire to construct

⁶⁹ Behan, *Mother*, p. 37.

⁷⁰ BMH, P. Casey (WS Ref. #1148), pp. 15-16.

⁷¹ NLI, RJD, 5th Aug. 1922, MS 32,582/41.

⁷² NLI, RJD, 6th Aug. 1922, MS 32,582/41.

an idealised, modest Irish dancer was thus not always complimented by dancing's social attraction. For young people, dancing was sexually stimulating.

As stated, Irish dances rarely conveyed detailed narratives (it is, perhaps, partly for this reason that Yeats turned to Japanese 'Noh' dancing in his dance plays).⁷³ There was no 'Soldier's Song' of dance, but social dances were important for radical groups. Sinn Féin, the Volunteers, Inghinidhe na hÉireann, Cumann na mBan, and, after 1921, the Free State army, all hosted dances.⁷⁴ Inghinidhe na hÉireann reported that its dances were a 'popular attraction' generating 'keen interest'.⁷⁵ This popularity allowed groups to use dances to fundraise for causes such as supporting prisoners' dependents.⁷⁶

Moreover, they allowed activists to engage with the movement and network. The Dublin Gaelic League advertised a dance in 1913 as 'an excellent opportunity to meet, dance, and converse with... fellow aspirants and workers in the national movement'.⁷⁷ In some instances, activists used these engagements to encourage cultural nationalist purity. Brian O'Higgins, in Goresbridge in 1913, encouraged his audience to 'dance no more foreign dances' (despite his defence of foreign music cited in Chapter One).⁷⁸

More often, however, engaging individuals with nationalist organisations meant deprioritising stylistic concerns. Thus, Volunteer gatherings included foxtrots and other 'foreign' dances.⁷⁹ Dances contributed to the integration of several future activists.

Rosamund Jacob's extensive enjoyment of dancing has been noted above. Michael

⁷³ W. B. Yeats, 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan' in W. B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (New York, 1961), p. 225; Ellis, *Plays*, p. 147.

⁷⁴ *Meath*, 19th Jan. 1918; NLI, Piaras Béaslaí Papers, MS 33,983(10); *Examiner*, 6th Dec. 1922; NLI, MS 18,817/6/1; *Programme of Concert in Mansion House Dublin* (Dublin, 1916), p. 4; NLI, Piaras Béaslaí Papers, MS 33,918(1).

⁷⁵ NLI, MS 18,817/6/1; NLI, MS 35,262/27.

⁷⁶ *Nenagh News*, 13th Apr. 1918.

⁷⁷ *Freeman's*, 3rd Jan. 1913.

⁷⁸ *Kilkenny*, 24th May 1913.

⁷⁹ NLI, MS 33,983(10).

Collins attended London Gaelic League céilidhe.⁸⁰ Liam de Róiste arranged dances with the Cork Gaelic League.⁸¹ Dancing thus provided nationalists with activities in which to participate in the years before the revolution.

Dances also provided propaganda opportunities. At a Sinn Féin dance in Dungarvan in 1918, the hall was decorated with portraits of Sinn Féin leaders and those executed in 1916.⁸² Dances allowed high-profile figures, such as Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Constance Markievicz, to make public appearances (particularly during elections).⁸³ They used the profits, amongst other purposes, to fund memorials, such as that for Thomas Ashe in Carrick in 1917.⁸⁴ Recreational dancing was also suitable for celebrations, notably by-election victories like that of de Valera in 1917, and on the release of prisoners after the signing of the Treaty.⁸⁵ The Free State Army similarly celebrated with dances when taking over former British barracks.⁸⁶ More potently, activists used dances to exclude characters whom they considered unsavoury. The GAA banned members from participating in ‘dances or similar entertainments provided by, or under the patronage of, soldiers, or police’.⁸⁷ The rule was embedded within rules banning foreign sports, and reflected a fetish for bans that characterised the Gaelic movement for decades. Elsewhere Michael O’Donohue, an Irish Volunteer from Lismore, described how a member of his company publicly humiliated a woman at a dance, Mary Kenfoot (a Cumann na mBan member), known to have had a relationship

⁸⁰ UCDA, Michael Collins Papers, P123/20(3).

⁸¹ *Examiner*, 6th Aug. 1905.

⁸² *Munster*, 26th Jan. 1918.

⁸³ NLI, Sheehy-Skeffington Collection, MS 33,627(5); *Munster*, 3rd Nov. 1917.

⁸⁴ *Munster*, 22nd Dec. 1917.

⁸⁵ *Meath*, 21st Jul. 1917; *Strabane*, 14th Jan. 1922.

⁸⁶ *An T’Oglac*, 5th May 1923.

⁸⁷ *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 10th Apr. 1915.

with a policeman. During a quadrille, as his turn to dance with Kenfoot came, he folded his arms, saying that he would not dance with anybody who was ‘running after the Tans’. O’Donohue’s description of the incident as a ‘comical scene’ in which the gathering took great amusement underlines the harassment to which dances could be appropriated in a volatile political context.⁸⁸

The police and military targeted dances for arrests where dissidents gathered in large numbers. Even if not publicly advertised, dances attracted attention. Nicholas O’Dwyer described an IRA dance in Caherguillamore in 1920:

A few days before Christmas, 1920, the Captain of the Grange Company came along to me and told me he was having a dance at a place called Caherguillamore on St Stephen’s Night. I said I thought it was very foolish. He said “the bloody Tans could have a dance and why couldn’t we have a dance?” I soon realised that I either had to have a row with this captain or let him go on with his dance. I decided, wrongly I think, to let him go on with the dance... I went in and I was there perhaps half an hour when I was told the house was surrounded by British forces. There was a certain amount of shooting and I think five of us or four of us got out.⁸⁹

The risk they took partly reflected their naivety, partly the need to maintain funding and morale. O’Dwyer’s experiences were not unique, and newspapers reported several other such raids.⁹⁰ In prison, dancing could raise morale in a similar manner to music. Eoin O’Duffy described dances held by political prisoners in Belfast Jail in 1918, including farewell dances for those being released.⁹¹ During the Civil War, Annie O’Farrelly wrote from North Dublin Union prison that ‘we never feel the time passing – we have

⁸⁸ O’Donohue, BMH, p. 61.

⁸⁹ N. O’Dwyer, BMH (WS Ref. #680), pp. 19-20.

⁹⁰ S. Donnelly, BMH (WS Ref. #1548), p. 18; *Examiner*, 18th Oct. 1920.

⁹¹ NLI, MS 48,280/1.

Irish, French, shorthand, and dancing classes during the day'.⁹² Prisoners in Kilmainham, Frongoch and Ballykinlar organised similar dances.⁹³ Dances thus staved off boredom, although none described dance as a form of resistance as some did with music.

Two approaches to Irish dance had emerged by the end of the revolutionary period. The ideal Irish dancer was strong if male, sexually chaste if female, and supported traditional (i.e. older, rural) dances in preference to those of the imperial masters. Where topography of title identified location and historical context, style identified nationality (conceptually merged with religion). While activists often accepted and even enforced distinctions between native and foreign dances, most valued dancing primarily as recreation. Attempts to use dance to promote the language had mixed success, and foreign dancing went essentially unchallenged. Instead, dancing allowed activists to network, disseminate propaganda, and exclude undesirables. The lack of control over the actual dancing public that this implied was epitomised in the growth of jazz, an increasingly important phenomenon in subsequent years.

⁹² NLI, Annie O'Farrelly Correspondence, MS 47,640/19.

⁹³ NLI, POS1638; KG, 'Programme of Labour Day Activities Ballykinlar No. 2 1921', 19NDID1205; KG, 'Gaol Concert Programmes', 20ND1D1108.

II

‘Jazzing the Soul of the Nation Away’: Dance and Dissent 1923-1935

Independent Ireland was an overwhelmingly Catholic country. For the Church, that meant the government was more likely to adhere to its views on public morality. It targeted cinema, explicit literature and contraception for censorship and bans, including a ban on the importation of birth control in 1935.⁹⁴ After 1923 definitions of Irish dancing incorporating and prioritising a Catholic emphasis on sexual modesty dominated public discourse. In contrast, public tastes were increasingly for genres of which Catholic and cultural nationalist ideologues did not approve. Competition for and between activists pushed political groups towards the most popular rather than the most Irish dance forms. The growth of jazz, especially, appeared to some to threaten the modesty of young men and women. The Gaelic League, GAA and Catholic Church each pursued measures that sought to undermine these threats, the apogee of which was the Public Dance Halls Act (1935). This section analyses the manner in which dance inflected discourses of politics and identity between 1923 and the passing of the 1935 Bill.

Just as Sandra McAvoy locates campaigns against contraception in a narrative of cultural nationalism and government adherence to Catholic teachings, existing scholarship identifies the Dance Halls Act as an exemplar of State subservience to cultural nationalism and Catholic diktats.⁹⁵ Barra Ó Cinnéide and Jim Smyth call the

⁹⁴ Gibbons, ‘Projecting the Nation’, pp. 210-212; S. McAvoy, ‘“A Perpetual Nightmare”: Women, fertility control, the Irish State, and the 1935 ban on contraceptives’ in M. Preston and M. Ó hOgairtaigh (eds.), *Gender and Medicine in Ireland, 1700-1950* (Syracuse, 2012), p. 189; L. Arrington, ‘“I Sing What Was Lost and Dread What Was Won”: W. B. Yeats and the Legacy of Censorship’, *Irish University Review* 38 (2) (Autumn-Winter, 2008), p. 222.

⁹⁵ McAvoy, ‘“A Perpetual Nightmare”’, p. 198.

Act ‘draconian’, and Smyth asserts that it became ‘practically impossible to hold dances without the sanction of priests’. The bill, he argues, was the culmination of the ‘anti-jazz campaign’, supported by priests seeking to ensure the unrivalled hegemony of Irish dances.⁹⁶ Luke Gibbons sees the campaign as a response to the diversification of dance culture brought on by jazz and an attempt to defend traditional dancing through government censorship.⁹⁷ Barbara O’Connor suggests that the Act constituted censorship of ‘foreign’ dancing, while Eileen Hogan positions it as the product of a ‘nation-building project’ by the ‘church/state alliance’.⁹⁸ Mark Finnane, likewise, calls it an attack on a ‘modernising popular culture’.⁹⁹ Others reductively label the dichotomy between ‘Irish’ and ‘foreign’ dances as Anglophobic.¹⁰⁰ Two weaknesses stand out in these studies. The first is the misleading assumption that the Dance Halls Bill was an enthusiastic capitulation to the anti-jazz campaign. The second is that they identify that campaign as one motivated by xenophobia or Anglophobia, despite substantial evidence that this campaign specifically, and in many ways exclusively, targeted jazz, not other equally ‘foreign’ dance forms. Eileen Hogan and Diarmaid Ferriter locate the anti-jazz campaign as part of a debate about sexual morality, and Ferriter notes that the 1935 legislation was only ‘patchily enforced’.¹⁰¹ However, absent from all of these studies is an interrogation of the assumed consensus between and within the Gaelic League, the anti-jazz campaign, and the State. Substantial variations in attitude were possible, even among the most passionate campaigners. As Ian McBride has written, the ‘identification of Church and State after independence was close but never absolute’.¹⁰² The political

⁹⁶ Smyth, ‘Dancing’, pp. 51-54; Barra Ó Cinnéide, *Riverdance: The Phenomenon* (Dublin, 2002), p. 47.

⁹⁷ Gibbons *Transformations*, pp. 73-75; Gibbons, ‘Projecting the Nation’, p. 210.

⁹⁸ O’Connor, *Irish Dancing*, pp. 13, 56; Hogan, ‘Earthly’, p. 58.

⁹⁹ M. Finnane, ‘The Carrigan Committee’, p. 536.

¹⁰⁰ J. Herlihy, *Footsteps, Fiddles, Flagstones and Fun* (Kilcummin, 2004), p. 31.

¹⁰¹ Ferriter, *Occasions*, pp. 178-179; Hogan, ‘Earthly’, p. 72.

¹⁰² I. McBride, ‘Religion’ in R. Bourke and I. McBride (eds.), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton, 2016), p. 310.

parties governing the Free State had their own discreet concerns that did not necessarily compliment those of cultural revivalists and religious commentators.

For political groups, dance was primarily a social activity. The IRA, Cumann na mBan, the Irish Self-Determination League, Sinn Féin, Labour, the Communist Party, Cumann na nGaedheal, the Blueshirts and Fianna Fáil all organised dances for their members.¹⁰³

In Northern Ireland, the Nationalist Party does not seem to have hosted dances themselves; these were instead provided by organisations with a more notable social element, particularly the Hibernians and National Foresters.¹⁰⁴ Primarily, this was a means of attracting supporters. The Communist James Gralton's free dances aimed to attract workers and young people, and drew large crowds.¹⁰⁵ Most did not run dances for free; the Blueshirts encouraged members to use them for fundraising.¹⁰⁶ Women's branches, the 'Blue Blouses', often attended also.¹⁰⁷ There was a 'big ladies' membership', and as a result Blueshirts described such dances as 'very popular'. Every former Blueshirt interviewed by historian Mike Cronin recalled attending dances.¹⁰⁸ In Cumann na mBan's case, dances served as a reminder that the group still existed despite post-Civil War disillusionment and falling membership.¹⁰⁹ As with a dance in Bandon in 1934, they also used dances to fundraise and recruit for the IRA.¹¹⁰ The parties most active in organising dances were the Blueshirts/Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. Unlike the dissident Republican movement, these groups were growing and attracting young

¹⁰³ These dances are described in NAI, JUS/8/201.

¹⁰⁴ *Anglo-Celt*, 19th Oct. 1931; *Ulster*, 7th Sept. 1929.

¹⁰⁵ Coogan, *IRA*, pp. 75-76.

¹⁰⁶ NAI, 'League of Youth: documents issued by', JUS/8/257.

¹⁰⁷ NAI, 'League of Youth dance at Ballyshannon, (Co. Donegal)', JUS/8/53.

¹⁰⁸ Cronin, *Blueshirts*, pp. 182-183.

¹⁰⁹ *Meath*, 4th Aug. 1934.

¹¹⁰ NAI, 'Activities of Cumann na mBan', JUS/2008/117/182.

supporters. They held dances regularly, and crucially advertised them in the same sections of newspapers as non-political dances, making them easily discoverable. They rarely enforced Irish dancing. When a Cumann na nGaedheal dance included Irish dancing it was described as a ‘special feature’, implying an unusual novelty.¹¹¹ At a Cumann na nGaedheal function in 1927, party leader William Cosgrave led the dancing of a foxtrot.¹¹² The Blueshirts held céilidhe, but not all (nor indeed most) of their dances were Irish in nature.¹¹³ While Fianna Fáil hosted céilidhe, its dances also included waltzes.¹¹⁴ The mixture of activities suggests that each offered a range of dancing activities that maximised their appeal. Concerns of cultural purity remained secondary.

Dances with high attendances provided platforms through which to convey political messages. Both Republicans and Blueshirts, for instance, held dances celebrating the release of political prisoners.¹¹⁵ Dances also allowed groups to make their claim to nationalist history. A Cumann na nGaedheal dance in Kilkenny in 1933 did so visually, displaying an image of William Cosgrave alongside the tricolour in the hall, while Blueshirt dances often featured the Blueshirt and Irish flags side by side.¹¹⁶ At a Fianna Fáil céilidh in Meath in 1934, the chairman called the party the ‘successor of the Sinn Féin movement’.¹¹⁷ At a Hibernian dance in Strabane in 1931, a speaker pledged to assist the national movement ‘by whatever means possible’.¹¹⁸ Although Sinn Féin was relatively inactive, when the organisation held a dance on St Patrick’s Day in 1925, the

¹¹¹ NAI, ‘League of Youth: documents issued during the years 1935 – 1936’, JUS/8/296; *Examiner*, 26th Jan. 1929.

¹¹² *Examiner*, 6th Dec. 1927.

¹¹³ *Western*, 14th Apr. 1934; *Press*, 30th Nov. 1934.

¹¹⁴ *Meath*, 19th May 1934; *Press*, 6th Feb. 1932.

¹¹⁵ NLI, RJD, 4th Mar. 1932, MS 32,582/69; NAI, JUS/8/37.

¹¹⁶ *Kilkenny*, 25th Feb. 1933; *Kilkenny*, 23rd Mar. 1935.

¹¹⁷ *Meath*, 19th May 1934.

¹¹⁸ *Strabane*, 6th Jun. 1931.

programme pledged its commitment to an ‘independent and unpartitioned nation’, encouraged others to join, and featured images of Wolfe Tone, Pádraic Pearse and Terence MacSwiney.¹¹⁹ Commemorative dances performed the same function. In 1930, Sinn Féin hosted a céilidh in London marking the anniversary of the Easter Rising, while Cumann na mBan organised another commemorating Kevin Barry in 1934.¹²⁰ As demonstrated, the Labour movement’s claim to nationalist traditions focused on James Connolly. Its dances were no exception, and the Dunmanway Labour Party marked the 18th anniversary of Connolly’s execution in 1934 with performances of ‘Napoleon’s Retreat’^{xiv} and ‘The Jockey at the Fair’^{xv}.¹²¹ Politicians used large dance audiences to make speeches. Fianna Fáil’s P. J. Little appropriated nationalist language at a dance in Waterford in 1933, referring to ‘the nation’s struggle’ to ensure that the ‘workless would get proper employment’.¹²² Brian O’Higgins often addressed Sinn Féin dances.¹²³ It is no coincidence that Eoin O’Duffy toured Blueshirt dances across the country to rally the movement behind him after his split with Fine Gael in 1934.¹²⁴ The *Blueshirt*, supporting O’Duffy, noted his celebrity status at such events, embodied in ‘wild cheers’ and autograph requests that greeted him before he spoke.¹²⁵ Dances gathered young activists around a common interest, presenting opportunities to construct common identities. This included claiming nationalist imagery, articulating political objectives, and cultivating support.

¹¹⁹ *St. Patrick’s Day Grand Irish Dance* (London, 1925).

¹²⁰ NLI, Sheehy-Skeffington Collection, MS 33,627(4); *Press*, 3rd Nov. 1934.

¹²¹ *Southern Star* (henceforth *Star*), 26th May 1934.

¹²² *Press*, 20th Nov. 1933.

¹²³ *Press*, 18th Mar. 1934.

¹²⁴ *Blueshirt*, 20th Oct. 1934.

¹²⁵ *Blueshirt*, 10th Nov. 1934.

High attendances made dances sites of friction between opposing factions, peaking during Blueshirt agitations in May 1934. In Ballyporeen that month, Blueshirts gathered outside a Fianna Fáil dance and chanted ‘Up O’Duffy!’ as patrons entered. In scenes repeated elsewhere, Fianna Fáil supporters responded by chanting ‘Up Dev!’.¹²⁶ In the reverse, attendees of a Blueshirt dance in Glengevlin found their route blocked by piles of stones. Days later in Ballydaly a dancing platform used by Blueshirts was burned down.¹²⁷ It was not unusual for Fianna Fáil and the Blueshirts to hold dances on the same night in the same location, symptomatic of their desire to compete for young audiences.¹²⁸ Where both factions attended the same dance, violence could follow. At a GAA dance in Ballindine, Blueshirts and Fianna Fáil supporters came to blows.¹²⁹ In August, police in Thomastown unsuccessfully asked Fianna Fáil representatives to ‘refrain from acts of violence or interference’ at an upcoming Blueshirt dance. Crowds gathered outside as guests entered, and an unidentified gunman fired revolver shots as the dance ended. The officer investigating believed that the Blueshirts fired the shots themselves ‘in the hope of creating a scare and obtaining propaganda’, particularly because senior members condemned the attack so quickly in the press.¹³⁰ His claims are difficult to prove, but the attack certainly provided useful propaganda for the Blueshirts, who pledged that the perpetrators would ‘reckon with justice’.¹³¹ In Northern Ireland, violence was less common at dances (it manifested itself more often at parades). Nevertheless, in isolated cases the Unionist government was prepared to suppress

¹²⁶ NAI, ‘Fianna Fáil meeting and dance at Ballyporeen, Co. Tipperary on 11 November 1934’, JUS/8/161.

¹²⁷ NAI, ‘Burning of dance platform at Ballydaly, Millstreet, Co. Cork on 31 May 1934’, JUS/8/17.

¹²⁸ *United Irishman*, 17th Feb. 1934.

¹²⁹ NAI, ‘Political fracas at Gaelic Athletic Association dance held at Ballyglass, (Co. Mayo) on 27 May 1934’, JUS/8/119.

¹³⁰ NAI, ‘Election celebrations at Kilkenny: disorderly scenes on 27 June 1934’, JUS/8/96.

¹³¹ *Examiner*, 30th Apr. 1934.

dances organised by suspicious groups. When police found an apparent ‘IRA organiser’ with leaflets advertising a céilidh near Monaghan for ‘released republican prisoners’, the government banned it.¹³²

Just as the support of political parties for ‘Irish’ dances was hollow, Free State governments gave no unusual levels of priority to dance education. The *National Programme of Primary Instruction* encouraged Schools to introduce ‘Irish step-dancing and Irish figure-dancing’ where possible, but it was neither compulsory nor specifically funded. As noted regarding music, the government prioritised the language. If schools did teach dancing, therefore, the curriculum advised that they give instructions in Irish.¹³³ Unsurprisingly, while the Northern Irish curriculum recommended dancing, there was no suggestion that it should be specifically Irish.¹³⁴ Thus, the promotion of Irish dancing on both sides of the border was primarily driven by cultural revivalists and the Gaelic League. Competitions enforced rigid gender roles. The rules of the 1924 Tailteann Games stated that no ‘female competitor’ should use ‘steps belonging to male dancers’. Published definitions drew upon established themes. *National Dances of Ireland* (published by the National School of Irish Dancing in 1928) defined Irish dances as ‘ancient’, ‘of the country, of the nation, of the people’, and rural. The body, it continued, should be ‘natural, upright and easy’, the man leading by taking the lady’s hand (but no more than that) in his, reflecting the influence of Catholic morality. Titles and figures conveyed a sense of place and historical identity. *National Dances of Ireland* featured ‘The Walls of Limerick’ and the ‘Waves of Tory’, in which dancers

¹³² PRONI, HA/32/1/479.

¹³³ *National Programme of Primary Instruction*, p. 15.

¹³⁴ PRONI, ‘Final Report of the Departmental Committee on the Educational Services in Northern Ireland’, D1631/1/15.

moved in lines representing waves off the coast of the Donegal island of Tory. The same guide stated that these dances did not ‘belong to any one section, any one age or any one class or generation’.¹³⁵ In the context of partition, this was an appeal to Protestants through an apparent shared culture. Like nationalist references to the Protestantism of Thomas Davis and the non-sectarian claims of Comhaltas, this appealed to a largely imagined Protestant community, rather than actual Northern Irish Protestants.

In 1929 the Gaelic League formed a committee to improve dance teaching and competition dancing. ‘Irish dancing’, it stated, ‘has been going very loosely of late... dances have been allowed to develop on local lines with the result that there are many varieties of the same dance’.¹³⁶ In 1931, it made the committee permanent in the form of the Irish Dancing Commission.¹³⁷ The Commission assigned itself the right to introduce uniform standards in teaching and adjudication as ‘a central recognised authority’, and publicly criticised the Department for Education for failing to make ‘special provision’ for dancing.¹³⁸ Principally, the Commission sought to standardise dancing through ‘control of Irish dancing competitions’.¹³⁹ To adjudicate at féiseanna, judges required Commission certification. The Commission introduced blanket rules requiring language tests before competitions, and prohibited the award of prizes to competitors whose clothes were not Irish made (it is unclear if/how this was tested).¹⁴⁰ The Commission regulated major Gaelic League competitions, including the Oireachtas

¹³⁵ *National Dances of Ireland* (New York, 1928), pp. v, 4, 121; *Examiner*, 2nd Apr. 1934.

¹³⁶ *Donegal*, 21st Dec. 1929.

¹³⁷ Breathnach, *Dancing*, p. 53.

¹³⁸ ‘Irish Dancing Commission’, *The Teacher’s Work* 24 (12) (Jun. 1934), p. 343.

¹³⁹ *Examiner*, 10th Apr. 1931.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

an Rince (Festival of Dance).¹⁴¹ It also managed the dancing competitions at the Tailteann Games.¹⁴² Competitions attracted high numbers (entries increased at each Tailteann Games), but elsewhere Irish dancing activities declined.¹⁴³ Rosamund Jacob expressed disappointment with low céilidhe turnouts, particularly among men.¹⁴⁴ Attempts to control Irish dance should be considered in this context. As Irish dancing's popularity declined, standardisation preserved it against outside influences. Competitions and centralised organisation offered a method of doing so.

More drastically, the Gaelic League and GAA also banned foreign dancing. As noted, the GAA banned members from dances organised by British soldiers or police. Delegates rejected attempts to remove this ban at their 1924 conference after the Cavan representative argued that 'British soldiers had not yet left Ireland', referring to Northern Ireland.¹⁴⁵ In February 1928, the Meath GAA proposed an automatic six-month suspension for members who promoted or attended foreign dances.¹⁴⁶ The rule was adopted, embedded in the clause banning foreign games.¹⁴⁷ In November 1929, the Gaelic League Coiste (Committee) drafted an equivalent rule.¹⁴⁸ The rule was not adopted immediately, but after the Dancing Commission's formation in 1931 it resolved to deny certification to judges or teachers who attended or assisted 'foreign dancing exhibitions'.¹⁴⁹ In 1932, the League extended the ban such that nobody who attended foreign dances could sit on a League committee.¹⁵⁰ This was notably less severe than

¹⁴¹ Breathnach, *Dancing*, p. 51.

¹⁴² GAAA, Tailteann Games Committee Minute Books, TG/01.

¹⁴³ *Examiner*, 25th Apr. 1934.

¹⁴⁴ NLI, RJD, 23rd Oct. 1932; NLI, RJD, 30th Dec. 1933.

¹⁴⁵ *Freeman's*, 21st Apr. 1924.

¹⁴⁶ *Meath*, 11th Feb. 1928.

¹⁴⁷ *Ulster*, 27th Apr. 1929.

¹⁴⁸ *Independent*, 11th Nov. 1929.

¹⁴⁹ *Examiner*, 10th Apr. 1931.

¹⁵⁰ *Examiner* 29th Apr. 1938.

the GAA ban and, as will become clear, reflected an ambivalence from members towards stringent measures. Reports that neither organisation enforced their respective bans were regular, and there were few instances of the League actually barring anybody from joining a Committee.¹⁵¹

The growth of jazz suggests that bans did not affect popular tastes. As noted, ‘jazz’ (an umbrella term covering everything from energetic versions of the waltz to the jive^{xvi} and foxtrot) was introduced to Ireland after the First World War. The public demonstrated their enthusiasm by attending late-night dances, often serving alcohol, in high numbers. By 1941 the cultural periodical *The Bell* estimated that Ireland hosted 1200 dance halls dealing mainly in jazz.¹⁵² There are few sources from its exponents; correspondents were more likely to write to newspapers to complain about jazz than defend it. A rare piece not condemning jazz dances stated: ‘their popularity lies in their simplicity’.¹⁵³ Others enthused about the fact that the dances were new and different. In 1919, the *Belfast Newsletter* attributed the admiration of ‘large and fashionable crowds’ for jazz dances to their interest in the ‘latest innovations’ and jazz dancing’s ‘sinuous arm movements, its gliding steps, and its graceful turns’.¹⁵⁴ Adverts for jazz dancing classes appealed to the idea that these ‘new’ dances were the latest fashion from London and Paris.¹⁵⁵ Complaints followed similar lines, stating that jazz was imported from ‘London and Paris’, emblematic of Catholic concerns about demoralising cosmopolitanism.¹⁵⁶ Jazz was commercial. Its popularity meant that it was often played on radio, and was

¹⁵¹ *Press*, 19th Dec. 1931; *Press*, 9th May 1933.

¹⁵² *The Bell* 1 (5) (Feb. 1941), p. 44.

¹⁵³ *Examiner*, 21st Oct. 1933.

¹⁵⁴ *Newsletter*, 7th Mar. 1919.

¹⁵⁵ *Newsletter*, 26th Feb. 1919; *Newsletter*, 19th Mar. 1919.

¹⁵⁶ Smyth, ‘Dancing’, p. 51.

favoured by advertisers.¹⁵⁷ The Gaelic League condemned broadcasters and suggested optimistically that ‘thousands of young jazz enthusiasts would just as keenly follow Irish dancing as they do jazz if the Irish product was boomed and advertised as much as the imported stuff’.¹⁵⁸ For priests, the ‘unwholesome’ sexuality implied in jazz hip movements made it a ‘menace to both religion and nationality’.¹⁵⁹ Unlike ‘orgies of jazz’, stated the 1928 Tailteann Games programme, Irish dances were ‘neither sensual not sensuous, but virile and expressive of innocent, hearty joy’.¹⁶⁰ Sean Og O’Kelly, Gaelic League secretary, accused politicians who allowed jazz to grow uninhibited of ‘jazzing the soul of the nation away’.¹⁶¹ His statement epitomised the use of nationalist language to equate Catholic and national goals. A poem printed in January 1925 employed explicitly anglophobic language:

Now tis jazz, jazz, jazz,
 With the Seonins one and all,
 They are jazzing in the cabin,
 They are jazzing in the hall,
 And the ancient Irish dances
 That were danced in days of yore,
 Are replaced by seonins jazzing
 On the old green shore.¹⁶²

Jazz was thus a threat to Irish dancing brought by Anglicised ‘seonins’. Others embellished their language with racial prejudice. According to Father Peter Conifrey, jazz was ‘borrowed from the language of the savages of Africa’ and its object was to ‘destroy the virtue in the human soul’.¹⁶³ Conifrey’s verdict synthesised Catholicism,

¹⁵⁷ Gibbons, *Transformations*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁵⁸ *Ballina Herald*, 13th Jan. 1934.

¹⁵⁹ *Fermanagh*, 17th Feb. 1934; *Independent*, 23rd Dec. 1933.

¹⁶⁰ *Aonach Tailteann* (Dublin, 1932), p. 49.

¹⁶¹ *Ulster*, 10th Feb. 1934.

¹⁶² *Longford Leader*, 10th Jan. 1925.

¹⁶³ *Examiner*, 9th Feb. 1934.

nationalism, racism, anti-Communism and anti-Commercialism. Jazz dancing, he claimed, was ‘not in the spirit of the men who gave their lives for Irish freedom’, having been ‘borrowed from Central Africa by a gang of wealthy international Bolshevists in America, their aim being to strike at Christian civilisation throughout the world’.¹⁶⁴

Despite the likely absence of wealthy, atheistic, black American communists, Conifrey’s vitriol gathered momentum in 1934 after the launch of the anti-jazz campaign, in which he was integral. The launch followed approximately three years of debate on the links between prostitution and dance halls. Conifrey, a priest from Cloone who was active in local government, launched the campaign with the local Gaelic League executive at a rally in Leitrim on 1 January. They called for a ban on ‘the organisation of jazz dances’, all-night dances and dances serving alcohol.¹⁶⁵ By mid-January, they had received messages of support from branches in Ballina, Fermanagh, Kerry and Roscommon.¹⁶⁶ These were largely clustered in the Northwest around Leitrim, although backing from Kerry (traditionally a nationalist stronghold) and Wexford demonstrated that there was sympathy elsewhere.¹⁶⁷ A Catholic organisation, the Association of St Nicholas Goodfellowship Circle, contributed a document declaring ‘war upon dance halls’.¹⁶⁸ The Irish Dancing Commission also expressed support.¹⁶⁹ The campaign stressed the ‘denationalising’ influence of jazz and blamed the

¹⁶⁴ *Examiner*, 14th Nov. 1934.

¹⁶⁵ *Anglo-Celt*, 26th Apr. 1902; *Independent*, 5th Jan. 1934; *Donegal Democrat*, 6th Jan. 1934.

¹⁶⁶ *Ballina Herald*, 13th Jan. 1934; *Fermanagh*, 13th Jan. 1934; *Kerryman*, 13th Jan. 1934; *Press*, 15th Jan. 1934.

¹⁶⁷ *Press*, 17th Jan. 1934.

¹⁶⁸ DA, Catholic Truth Society 1931-1934, Box 5.

¹⁶⁹ *Press*, 16th Jan. 1934.

British army for introducing these ‘dancing orgies’, combining the language of nationalism with that of sexual morality.¹⁷⁰

Politicians looking to be on what appeared to be the right side of the debate added their own voices. County councillors in Limerick expressed support in late January, while the Fianna Fáil convention unanimously voted its support in February.¹⁷¹ Party leader Éamon de Valera sent his personal if noncommittal backing.¹⁷² However, unlike studies that interpret these moves as emblematic of a Church/State consensus, they should be seen as the empty gestures of populist politics. Indeed, campaigners saw political groups as part of the problem. As Mike Cronin notes, the Blueshirts came into conflict with priests over the lack of clerical supervision at their dances.¹⁷³ In 1933, the Republican activist Fionan Breathnach criticised Fianna Fáil for the number of ‘foreign dances’ at its events.¹⁷⁴ Sean Og O’Kelly criticised Fianna Fáil for allowing jazz programmes on Radio Éireann.¹⁷⁵ Conifrey pressured the government to teach Irish dancing to the army and police, whom he believed were the worst offenders. ‘President de Valera’, he stated, ‘should be ashamed’ given that these dances continued even after the start of the campaign.¹⁷⁶

Despite obvious crossover in personnel, it is important to separate the anti-jazz campaign from the GAA and Gaelic League bans. Unlike the bans, the anti-jazz campaign focused exclusively on jazz. Even Conifrey stated that they were not targeting

¹⁷⁰ *Kerryman*, 10th Feb. 1934.

¹⁷¹ *Kerryman*, 20th Jan. 1934; *Anglo-Celt*, 24th Feb. 1934.

¹⁷² *Donegal*, 6th Jan. 1934.

¹⁷³ Cronin, *Blueshirts*, pp. 188-191.

¹⁷⁴ *Press*, 3rd Feb. 1933; *Press*, 27th Dec. 1947; *Press*, 12th Mar. 1938.

¹⁷⁵ *Ulster*, 10th Feb. 1934.

¹⁷⁶ *Examiner*, 9th Feb. 1934; *Leitrim Observer*, 10th Feb. 1934.

the waltz.¹⁷⁷ The campaign similarly did not target the Abbey Theatre School of Ballet, formed in 1928 by Yeats in an attempt to inject greater cosmopolitanism into Dublin life.¹⁷⁸ Ballet was something audiences watched, rather than participated in, and it was not as new or sexual as jazz. The campaign was instigated and carried by religious interests primarily concerned with the perceived stylistic immoralities in jazz dances. It took on an Irish character, shared some objectives with cultural nationalism, and borrowed nationalist language, but did not owe its existence solely or principally to nationalism or Anglophobia. Nor were negative responses to jazz limited to Ireland.¹⁷⁹ Even in Ireland, the campaign was criticised. The Irish Dance Teachers Association (a cross-genre group), claimed that the campaign really intended to ‘force Irish dances on an unwilling public’.¹⁸⁰ The Irish Dance Commission rebuked the Association’s views, saying it did not speak for Irish dancers. The Association responded that the anti-jazz campaign had done ‘more harm than good’.¹⁸¹ The campaign had little effect on the Association’s membership, which increased by 25 per cent from 1934 to 1935.¹⁸² Press reception was similarly mixed; the *Southern Star* suggested promoting Irish dances might be more productive than denigrating jazz. The *Meath Chronicle* called the campaign’s concerns ‘exaggerated’.¹⁸³

The GAA and Gaelic League bans inspired similar responses. When the Limerick County Library committee debated whether to allow the use of their hall for foreign

¹⁷⁷ *Examiner*, 14th Nov. 1934.

¹⁷⁸ Ellis, *Plays*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ J. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham, 2003), p. 57; G. Macklin, ““Onward Blackshirts!”: Music and the British Union of Fascists’, *Patterns of Prejudice* 47 (4-5) (2013), p. 448.

¹⁸⁰ *Sunday*, 14th Jan. 1932.

¹⁸¹ *Independent*, 16th Jan. 1934; *Press*, 17th Jan. 1934.

¹⁸² *Press*, 6th Dec. 1935.

¹⁸³ *Star*, 20th Jan. 1934; *Meath*, 10th Feb. 1934.

dances in December 1935, committee members argued that some among them had ‘fought for the independence of their country’ but were ‘broad minded enough to permit the dancing of the waltz’.¹⁸⁴ In April 1935, Dublin’s Father Mathew Féis compiled a programme including foreign dance, in defiance of the League ban. One organiser made their disdain plain:

[T]he rank and file of the Gaelic League are not fossilised like its chief committee... A Gaelic Leaguer who dances an international waltz or a Spanish tango^{xvii} or a Highland fling^{xviii}... is breaking the rules made by these new and old fossils.¹⁸⁵

The description of Gaelic League leaders as ‘fossils’ starkly illustrates the generational divide. Letters to newspapers soon appeared supporting the ‘stand’ they had taken.¹⁸⁶ Just as there was a limited Church/State consensus on jazz, there was little agreement among Gaelic League members about how to promote national dances.

The government response reflected the public’s ambivalence. The government had established the Carrigan Committee in 1930 to report on juvenile prostitution, which the following year recommended new licensing restrictions for dance halls. The government analysis was that the report ‘should be taken with reserve’ and that the section on dance halls ‘wanders some way from the terms of reference’. ‘Their suggestions almost amount to suppression of public dancing’ and their recommendations were ‘practically without value’. When the report resurfaced ahead of a Public Dance Halls Bill, police expressed similar views. They had, they said, ‘little cause for complaint regarding Dance Halls’:

¹⁸⁴ *Limerick*, 21st Dec. 1935.

¹⁸⁵ *Press*, 19th Apr. 1935.

¹⁸⁶ *Independent*, 23rd Apr. 1935.

It is true that attendance at such places may provide opportunities for immorality and unseemly conduct, and it is on this ground that objection is taken by clergymen and others, the view being held by the large number of people that these places are responsible for the great increase in immorality amongst the young people. It is not suggested that immorality occurs in these places, but rather that the existence of them provides opportunity for meeting and associating and in this way are responsible for problem.

Existing laws, they continued, were adequate, but poorly enforced.¹⁸⁷ When the Dáil and Seanad debated the Dance Halls Bill, representatives made no reference to Irish, foreign or jazz dances in the short discussion. Instead, their primary concern was for the quality of buildings used as dance venues.¹⁸⁸ The resultant act was little more than a health and safety licensing system. District courts considered applications, accounting for the suitability of the premises, existing dancing facilities in the area, available parking, suitable police supervision, proposed opening hours, the age of patrons, and any other matter deemed relevant by the judge.¹⁸⁹ Proposals made in the Carrigan Committee report were conspicuously absent. The act did not ban those holding alcohol licenses from holding dance licenses, and gave no specific role to local government (on which many anti-jazz campaigners like Conifrey sat). Far from draconian censorship, it is difficult to see a single aim of the anti-jazz campaign or Gaelic League that was achieved. Even Conifrey's hopes of changing the nature of dances held by the army and police were thwarted, as both were exempt from the rules passed.¹⁹⁰ The anti-jazz campaigners comprised a vocal interest group whose complaints the government felt obliged to appease, but not whose actual aims it felt obliged to facilitate.

¹⁸⁷ NAI, 'Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1934', JUS/90/8/50.

¹⁸⁸ 'In Committee on Finance – Public Dance Halls Bill, 1934 – Second Stage', 28th Jun. 1934, Dáil Éireann Debates Vol. 53 (10), 16.

¹⁸⁹ NAI, JUS/90/8/50.

¹⁹⁰ 'Public Dance Halls Bill, 1934 – Committee Stage', 19th Dec. 1934, Seanad Éireann Debates Vol. 19 (9).

Unsurprisingly, the Bill's practical enforcement was unspectacular. In rare cases, judges granting licences requested 'that a large number of the dances should be Irish', as in Donegal (in the anti-jazz northwest heartland) in January 1935. Even so, this was a preference, not a ban, unlike the stringent minimum age of eighteen on which he also insisted.¹⁹¹ Compared to the prohibition on importing contraceptives, these measures appear strikingly lax.¹⁹² Indeed, traditional dancing venues were equally affected by licensing laws as others.¹⁹³ Overwhelmingly, judges were concerned with the size, safety and quality of buildings.¹⁹⁴ The Irish Dance Teachers Association, a prime offender regarding foreign dance, welcomed the act.¹⁹⁵ Members of the Dublin Gaelic League, meanwhile, condemned the act and any potential age limits, which they felt could cost them young members.¹⁹⁶ As Gearóid Ó hAllmharáin demonstrates, organising informal traditional dances became more difficult because of the legislation.¹⁹⁷ This should not be exaggerated. Irish dancing's supremacy was short-lived and already declining before 1934, but the legislation certainly underwhelmed campaigners. One *Connaught Telegraph* editorial in 1940 was particularly despondent:

It is illuminating to ponder on the development of dancing in Ireland since the Dance Halls Act was introduced. No girl in the country appears to be fully equipped for the problems of this life unless she possesses a fine knowledge of Jitterbugging^{xix} or some such mystic movement. She need not bother about such trite acquisitions as a knowledge of roast-cooking or soup-making. All that matters is that she shall have danced "lights

¹⁹¹ *Strabane*, 15th Jan. 1935.

¹⁹² McAvoy, "A Perpetual Nightmare", p. 189.

¹⁹³ *Examiner*, 15th Jan. 1935.

¹⁹⁴ *Meath*, 15th Jan. 1935.

¹⁹⁵ *Press*, 31st Aug. 1935.

¹⁹⁶ *Press*, 28th Oct. 1935.

¹⁹⁷ G. Ó hAllmharáin, 'Dancing on the Hobs of Hell: Rural Communities in Clare and the Dance Halls Act of 1935', *New Hibernia Review*, 9 (4) (Winter, 2005), pp. 9-18.

out” for a number of years... The Dance Halls Act has been a charming failure.¹⁹⁸

Just as the more restrictive ban on imported birth control never entirely prevented the use of contraception, dance halls legislation failed to prevent women engaging in unseemly dances instead of learning their domestic duties – that male dancers escaped blame is noteworthy, if unsurprising.¹⁹⁹

The campaign itself was symptomatic of the illusion that ‘Irish’ dancing was ever entirely hegemonic. Before and during the revolution céilidhe were important sites of youth culture, but always tolerated a degree of aesthetic deviance. By the 1930s, Irish dancing had been largely displaced among young people by newer imports. Appealing to nationalist heritage was more about rhetoric, symbols and token gestures than actual commitment to Irish forms, as demonstrated by political groups. The hollow Public Dance Halls Act was thus an unremarkable licensing system framed and interpreted as a response to vocal interest groups. It did not significantly affect dance culture, but it certainly took the wind out of the anti-jazz campaign. Concerns about jazz did not disappear, but in subsequent years they did not take the form of a coordinated national campaign.

¹⁹⁸ *Telegraph*, 5th Oct. 1940.

¹⁹⁹ G. Jones, ‘Marie Stopes in Ireland – The Mother’s Clinic in Belfast, 1936-47’, *Social History of Medicine* 5 (2) (1992), p. 259.

III

Modernising Irish Dance 1935-1972

A recurring theme throughout this chapter has been the disparity between the attitudes of dance theorists and the public. After 1935, however, those promoting Irish dance became increasingly willing to do so through less puritanical means. That process was slow, but the trend was persistent, and there was increasing evidence of intercultural dialogue between Irish and ‘foreign’ dancing. The céilidh never reclaimed the position it had occupied before the revolution as a primary space for youth culture. However, with improved organisational structures, greater inclusivity and, crucially, State aid and private sponsorship, Irish dancing established itself in modern culture. The prevailing interpretation of dancing in Ireland after 1935 is one of institutionalised antiquity.²⁰⁰ Catherine Foley argues that the hegemony of competitive dancing had the effect of homogenising styles, the result of the ‘political machinery’ of the ‘cultural nationalist movement’.²⁰¹ Various choreographers, contributing to *Dancing on the Edge of Europe*, suggest that the inflexible competition rules stifled innovative choreography. This has the advantage of providing modern choreographers with a narrative in which they have overcome the inhibitions of the establishment, but also requires that earlier choreographers are flippantly described as ‘doomed to failure’.²⁰² In these conceptions, cultural nationalism created aesthetic barriers to artistic expression. Certainly, as Victoria O’Brien demonstrates, infrastructure and institutional knowledge were lacking, but to neglect the modernisation of cultural nationalist dance (e.g. the ballet companies

²⁰⁰ O’Connor, *Irish Dancing*, p. 13.

²⁰¹ C. Foley, *Step-dancing in Ireland: Culture and History* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 153, 190.

²⁰² D. Theodores (ed.) *Dancing on the Edge of Europe: Irish Choreographers in Conversation* (Cork, 2003), pp. 14, 150.

run by choreographer Joan Denise Moriarty) is to misrepresent its development.²⁰³ Like that of music, dance historiography too readily assumes that Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (which also promoted dance) was entirely conservative. This creates a false dichotomy between competition dancing and choreography and neglects the relationship between the two. It similarly does not address the extent to which cultural nationalists relaxed their views.

The frequency with which cultural nationalists and Catholic commentators complained about dance halls illustrates the limits on their apparent powers of censorship. Dance hall licenses were, occasionally, issued with what conservative commentators might have deemed to be appropriate restrictions (e.g. no dances on Church holidays).²⁰⁴ A judge in 1938 stated that he would only renew licenses if hall owners committed to having no jazz.²⁰⁵ A group of TDs also succeeded, in May 1943, with convincing Radio Éireann to cancel programmes that included jazz from its schedules, although the BBC gave Irish audiences easy access to jazz.²⁰⁶ Largely, however, halls ignored revivalist and religious ideals. In 1939, the militant Catholic organisation ‘Catholic Action’ reported that the ‘young of both sexes’ were threatening the ‘Christian family’ in their ‘frequentation of dance halls’.²⁰⁷ In 1955, a committee appointed by the Archdiocese in Dublin to investigate suspected Communist organisations reported that several halls in Dublin permitted ‘intimately immoral’ dances. It recommended (unsuccessfully) that police intervene.²⁰⁸ The dancing was ‘almost 100% jiving’ with the exception of some

²⁰³ O’Brien, *Ballet*, pp. 109, 125; Fleischmann, *Founder*.

²⁰⁴ NAI, ‘Dance halls: miscellaneous enquires and reports’, JUS/2006/148/5.

²⁰⁵ *Independent*, 16th Sept. 1938.

²⁰⁶ *Mayo News*, 15th May 1943.

²⁰⁷ DA, ‘Catholic Action; Catholic Truth Society Papers, Box 5.

²⁰⁸ DA, ‘Communists’, XXIII/4.

‘slow dances’ when ‘the position in which the partners held themselves was even worse and more indecent’.²⁰⁹ The Gaelic League, similarly, criticised de Valera for attending a military tattoo in 1945 that included ‘foreign dancing’.²¹⁰ These complaints do not suggest that ideologues were having it their own way. Beyond this vocal minority, foreign dancing’s immoralities were not felt to be prohibitive. Indeed, a *Sunday Independent* article in November 1952 commented that any dance including only céilidh dances would ‘certainly be a failure’ because ‘young people’ would only patronise ‘foreign dances’.²¹¹ In 1969, Breandán Breathnach distributed dance questionnaires across Ireland. Respondents regularly described waltzes and ‘barn dances’ as Irish dances alongside jigs and reels without apprehension. Even ‘American dances’ were seemingly acceptable, including the ‘Cake Walk’^{xx} and the varsovienne^{xxi} ‘in which the man did not embrace his partner but rather took her by the hands or stood behind her and took her hands from over her shoulders’.²¹² These examples suggest that many embraced cosmopolitan dance cultures and less stringent definitions of Irish dance.

The removal of foreign dance bans indicates that attitudes were softening. The bans were a source of friction among cultural nationalists. In 1938, the Limerick Gaelic League tabled a motion to remove the League’s ban. The local GAA criticised the suggestion and threatened to withdraw its teams from the League’s hurling tournament.²¹³ The Limerick Gaelic League committee responded disparagingly:

Since its inception in 1893, up to 1932, the Gaelic League was free from bans. During that time it claimed the loyalty and

²⁰⁹ DA, ‘Communists’, XXIII/17.

²¹⁰ NAI, ‘Gaelic League: foreign dances’, PRES/1/P2591.

²¹¹ *Sunday*, 9th Nov. 1952.

²¹² IFC, Breandán Breathnach Questionnaires/02.

²¹³ *Examiner*, 25th Apr. 1938.

service of such Gaels as Pearse, Seoirse Mac Fhlannchadha [a former Limerick Mayor killed during the Anglo-Irish War], MacSwiney and Brugha – and the co-operation of the GAA... The removal of the ban simply means that ordinary members of the Gaelic League, hitherto prevented, may now act on committees.²¹⁴

If a movement without dance bans had previously sufficed for nationalist martyrs (and the GAA), they argued, it should do so now. Occasionally, critics attacked céilidhe for including waltzes.²¹⁵ The Leinster GAA insisted that branches holding dances submit programmes for approval.²¹⁶ In 1945, however, the Gaelic League removed its ban, allowing those who attended foreign dances to join committees with ‘complete freedom’. Newspapers responded positively and encouraged the GAA to follow, observing that the ban served ‘no useful purpose’ (if anything, they said, it encouraged imports like the ‘Charleston’^{xxii}).²¹⁷ League rules still prohibited branches from actively promoting foreign dances, and a motion to recognise barn dances and waltzes as Irish in 1952 was heavily defeated.²¹⁸ Nevertheless, the ban’s removal was a significant reform. The GAA ban was more tenacious. It was contained within rules banning members from participating in foreign sport, meaning that its removal was more emotionally charged (dance was not the *raison d’être* for the Gaelic League that sport was for the GAA). Thus, although senior GAA figures accepted that the dance ban had ‘failed in its purpose’, in April 1969 their congress voted resoundingly against repealing it.²¹⁹ Its eventual removal coincided with that on foreign games in 1971; such was the magnitude of that decision that the *Sunday Independent* interpreted it as part of a ‘pattern of events which is rapidly changing the meaning of being Irish’.²²⁰

²¹⁴ *Examiner*, 29th Apr. 1938.

²¹⁵ *Sunday*, 18th Feb. 1940.

²¹⁶ *Independent*, 25th Sept. 1939.

²¹⁷ *Limerick*, 27th Oct. 1945.

²¹⁸ *Sunday*, 21st Oct. 1945.

²¹⁹ *Sunday*, 24th Dec. 1967.

²²⁰ *Sunday*, 18th Apr. 1971.

The removal of bans did not inhibit Irish dancing. Indeed, although not a mainstream pastime among young people, Irish dancing experienced a revival from the 1940s largely due to the popularity of competitions. The licences required for public dances under the Dance Halls Bill meant that any restoration required a degree of organisation. Féiseanna were central, and dance competitions attracted some of the highest numbers of entrants.²²¹ In 1939, the Oireachtas included dancing competitions and social céilidhe.²²² The Dancing Commission still required that adjudicators and teachers pass language tests, and the stated aim of organisers was to ‘unite all the forces favourable to the language’, but there is no mention of examinations being applied to competitors.²²³ Dance competitions continued expanding. In 1969, the GAA created ‘Scór’ competitions, including step and figure-dancing.²²⁴ The same year, the Dancing Commission established the World Dancing Championships; they attracted over 3,000 competitors in 1972.²²⁵ Competitions, reinvigorated by State support, less stringent regulation, and increased organisation, drove Irish dancing’s success.

Of the groups promoting dance revival, Comhaltas employed the most sophisticated combination of methods. It did not impose bans or language examinations. The branch system discussed in Chapter Three allowed for a wide geographical reach and local participatory events. The Edenderry branch held weekly céilidhe and regular competitions.²²⁶ Northern Irish branches participated in competitions on an equal basis;

²²¹ *Féis Myra Programme* (Dublin, 1940), p. 3; *Press*, 28th Mar. 1949.

²²² NAI, ‘An t-Oireachtas’, TSCH/97/9/187; NAI, TSCH/97/9/302.

²²³ NAI, TSCH/97/9/187.

²²⁴ P. Healy, *Gaelic Games and the Gaelic Athletic Association* (Cork, 1998), p. 28; *Independent*, 12th Feb. 1972.

²²⁵ *Press*, 16th Mar. 1972; Ó Cinnéide, *Riverdance*, p. 33.

²²⁶ T. Wall, *35 Years of Edenderry Comhaltas 1961-1996* (Edenderry, 2000), p. 10, 123.

by 1971 the Comhaltas West Tyrone Féis had expanded to a seven-day event from its original three.²²⁷ Comhaltas festivals also included social céilidhe.²²⁸ Publications were important for marketing. The *Céilidhe Record* enjoyed a short run, and *Treoir* promoted dancing alongside its musical content.²²⁹ As with music, Comhaltas produced broadcasts on dancing with RTÉ (and criticised the broadcaster for not transmitting enough of it).²³⁰ The organisational structures and modern innovations of Comhaltas, therefore, enhanced its promotion of Irish dances.

The compromises tolerated by Comhaltas did not go uncriticised. Lax enforcement of Irish forms allowed waltzes to be included in céilidhe programmes, inevitably attracting disapproval. One writer in *Treoir* condemned these incidents as the result of unchecked ‘commercialism’.²³¹ The more particular editors of *Ceol*, including Breandán Breathnach, were similarly sceptical. They criticised Comhaltas for including non-Irish dances in its broadcasts.²³² In 1963, one writer labelled the clapping and snapping of fingers during dances the ‘customs of barbarous nations’.²³³ These comments, particularly the racialised language, were unusual and anachronistic by 1963. Most importantly, their complaints suggest that Comhaltas members ignored traditional practices to such an extent that traditionalists felt impelled to highlight it. Others derided strict competition standards as stifling, ensuring that ‘the old forms [were] preserved’ but inhibiting ‘anything new or exciting’.²³⁴ The accusation that

²²⁷ *Ulster*, 8th May 1971.

²²⁸ *Bun-Fleadh: Granard Harp Festival* (Granard, 1983).

²²⁹ *Treoir* 9 (Jul. 1969), p. 5.

²³⁰ *Treoir* 3 (Jul. 1968), p. 8; *Treoir* 9 (Jul. 1969), p. 9.

²³¹ *Treoir* 9 (Jul. 1969), p. 2.

²³² *Ceol: A Journal of Irish Music* 1 (3) (1963), p. 30.

²³³ *Ceol: A Journal of Irish Music* 2 (1) (1963), p. 43.

²³⁴ NAI, TSCH/2011/127/409.

competitions with standardised dances inhibited original choreography is unsatisfactory.

Both the World Dancing Championships and Comhaltas events, notably, included competitions for originally choreographed dances.²³⁵

Moreover, arguably the most artistically innovative Irish dancing emerged from traditional dancing and competition culture, notably Irish ballet. Sara Payne was the first to fuse traditional dancing with ballet. In Dublin in 1936, she opened a ballet school alongside traditional dance teacher George Leonard with a view to establishing a company.²³⁶ Payne and her dancers gave multiple performances between 1937 and 1942.²³⁷ Another company, An Ceol Cumann, was founded in 1938.²³⁸ Cepta Cullen established the Irish Ballet Production Society in 1939, which became the Irish Ballet Club, and performed until 1943.²³⁹ These groups were short-lived, but that led by Joan Denise Moriarty had more longevity. Moriarty moved to Cork in 1944 and established a company with Aloys Fleischmann three years later.²⁴⁰ The two met when Moriarty played the pipes for Fleischmann's 'Clare's Dragoons'. Moriarty also formed a folkdance group in 1958 and toured internationally, before establishing a professional ballet company in 1959.²⁴¹ In Dublin, Patricia Ryan founded a dancing school in 1953. That school became the Irish National Ballet under Ryan's directorship in 1957, and went professional in 1962.²⁴² Ryan and Moriarty's schools were merged at the Arts Council's insistence in 1963, but folded a year later due to the impracticalities of having

²³⁵ Breathnach, *Dancing*, p. 53; *Treoir* 2 (Apr. 1968), p. 6.

²³⁶ *Press*, 20th Jan. 1936; *Press*, 14th Apr. 1936.

²³⁷ *Press*, 15th Nov. 1937; *Independent*, 1st Jun. 1942.

²³⁸ *Press*, 5th Nov. 1938; *Independent*, 7th Nov. 1938.

²³⁹ *Press*, 8th Feb. 1941; *Press*, 1st Mar. 1943.

²⁴⁰ CCCA, Hilda Buckley Scrapbooks (henceforth HBS), PR/HB (7).

²⁴¹ Fleischmann, *Founder*, pp. 15-16, 27-28; CCCA, HBS, PR/HB (4).

²⁴² Fleischmann, *Ireland's*, p. 15; *Press*, 10th Oct. 1957.

two directors (Ryan and Moriarty). The amateur Cork Ballet Company continued, and Moriarty formed a new professional company, the Irish Ballet Company, in 1973. That company was granted national status, and became the Irish National Ballet, operating successfully before folding in 1989.²⁴³ Fleischmann's Cork International Choral and Folk Dance Festival also included dance exhibitions.²⁴⁴ The longevity of Moriarty's work compared to earlier incarnations was primarily funding related. She successfully mobilised business support in Cork. The Arts Council was also key. Performances always made a loss, even if sold out, and the Council covered 50 per cent of losses.²⁴⁵ They continued to support the company after it went professional, although 70 per cent of funding came from corporate sponsors.²⁴⁶ Direct grants were not the only form of State support. The government also waived visa fees for dancers from abroad attending the Cork International Choral and Folk Dance festival.²⁴⁷ From the 1960s, RTÉ also broadcast performances.²⁴⁸

These were not the efforts of choreographers inhibited by institutionalised dance culture. Indeed, many of those cultivating ballet were products of cultural nationalism. Sara Payne and Cepta Cullen were members of the Abbey Theatre School of Ballet with no prior experience of Irish dancing.²⁴⁹ However, George Leonard, who worked with Payne, was a 'prominent Irish dance teacher'.²⁵⁰ Easter rebel Joseph Crofts provided music for some of Payne's ballets.²⁵¹ Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair travelled to the Gaeltacht

²⁴³ Fleischmann, *Founder*, pp. 15-16, 31, 34.

²⁴⁴ *Cork International Choral and Folk Dance Festival* (Cork, 1973).

²⁴⁵ *Sunday*, 22nd May 1955; CCCA, HBS, PR/HB (5).

²⁴⁶ Fleischmann, *Ireland's*, p. 8; *Examiner*, 31st Oct. 1973.

²⁴⁷ NAI, Information on Irish music and dancing, DFA/AR/5/33.

²⁴⁸ JDMAF, Choreography Notes.

²⁴⁹ *Independent*, 27th Dec. 1930.

²⁵⁰ *Press*, 17th Apr. 1936.

²⁵¹ *Press*, 15th Nov. 1937.

and learned Irish during his youth, trained at the Royal Irish Academy, and adjudicated at féiseanna.²⁵² He composed for Payne, An Ceol Cumann and the Cork Ballet Company.²⁵³ Patricia Ryan had a ballet background, having trained in Los Angeles, London and South Africa before moving to Ireland.²⁵⁴ Moriarty, on the other hand, was a product of both the Irish and ballet schools. Her family were active in the GAA and Gaelic League. She received ballet training in Paris and London, but was also British champion in Irish step-dancing in 1931.²⁵⁵ Like Fleischmann, Moriarty's emigrant experiences gave her an acute awareness both of her Irishness and of foreign genres. Those driving Irish ballet therefore had hybrid backgrounds that combined cosmopolitanism and cultural nationalism, including competitions, Irish dancing, foreign travel and classical training.

Hybridity is also evidenced in the choreography. Payne explained that she did not intend Irish dances 'to be in anyway forgotten, or altered in any way. On the contrary, the traditional and folk dances will provide the raw material for the new ballet dances'.²⁵⁶ Narratives also reflected these influences. George Leonard wanted to use 'his experience of Irish dancing to give Miss Payne a basis for the ballet which would... deal with some period of Irish history, and tell a folk tale in the form of a dance'.²⁵⁷ They produced, for example, *The Doomed Cuculainn*, a first-century Ulster legend.²⁵⁸ Like Payne, Cepta Cullen based her choreography 'upon the traditional measures of

²⁵² *Independent*, 20th Oct. 1943; *Press*, 13th Apr. 1939.

²⁵³ *Press*, 5th Nov. 1938; *Examiner*, 7th Oct. 1958.

²⁵⁴ *Press*, 10th Oct. 1957.

²⁵⁵ Fleischmann, *Founder*, p. 99; Fleischmann, *Ireland's*, p. 11; *Star*, 7th Feb. 1948.

²⁵⁶ *Press*, 20th Jan. 1936.

²⁵⁷ *Press*, 17th Apr. 1936.

²⁵⁸ *Press*, 15th Nov. 1937.

Irish dancing'.²⁵⁹ Moriarty re-choreographed many of Payne and Cullen's ballets and choreographed her own.²⁶⁰ Her programmes included at least one 'Irish' ballet each year.²⁶¹ Her dancers described Moriarty's deliberate policy of teaching balletic steps alongside jigs and reels.²⁶² For Israeli dancer Domcy Reiter-Soffer, who had no previous experience of Irish dancing, this was 'utterly foreign'.²⁶³ Irish dances provided a folk quality, a sense of place, and an added physicality (these dances were originally conceived as a means of developing the strength of Irishmen). Balletic elements (mime, arm movements, character interaction) added a narrative feature usually absent from Irish dances. *West Cork Ballad*, with music by Sean Ó Riada, is an illustrative example.²⁶⁴ The ballet depicts a fiddler attempting to woo a shopkeeper's daughter by playing for her. Unexpectedly, he finds that his playing puts her under a spell.²⁶⁵ When the fiddler enters, he dances a jig. Likewise, when the female dancers join they dance a reel. This establishes an energetic folk setting with a peasant quality. When the fiddler plays and the shopkeeper's daughter falls under the spell, ballet takes over. She moves towards him and puts her head on his shoulder, then dances a pas-de-bourrée before an arabesque, a transformation from the original reel that conveys the spell's supernatural effect. The two dance a graceful pas-de-deux, a common device in traditional ballet and in Moriarty's love scenes.²⁶⁶ Thus, Irish dances establish the setting's vibrant rural character, before ballet conveys the supernatural narrative and the emotional connection between its protagonists. The intercultural dialogue between these genres constitutes a

²⁵⁹ *Independent*, 7th Nov. 1938; *Press*, 6th Oct. 1939.

²⁶⁰ *Press*, 6th May 1948.

²⁶¹ E. Corathiel, 'Irish Ballet's Own Saga: The Success Story of Joan Denise Moriarty', *Ballet Today* 1 (6) (May 1958), pp. 10-21 (copy contained in JDMAF).

²⁶² *Ibid.* p. 57.

²⁶³ JDMAF, Ó Riada Collaborations.

²⁶⁴ CCCA, HBS, PR/HB (5).

²⁶⁵ JDMAF, Ó Riada Collaborations.

²⁶⁶ JDMAF, 'West Cork Ballad', Choreography Notes.

considerable innovation in Irish dancing, with tangible changes in form and presentation.

The reception of the Irish ballets was largely positive. One review called Cullen ‘Ireland’s first serious choreographer’.²⁶⁷ Reviews of Moriarty’s companies described the ‘wealth of choice’ offered by folk tales, and praised her ‘compromise’ between the two styles for ‘liberating’ traditional dancing ‘from its bonds in giving it expression’.²⁶⁸ Even where negative, reviewers did not dismiss the ballets as foreign abominations or trivialities. A review of Cullen’s *Rhapsodie* complained that ‘for too long stretches the stage is left without a focal point – or too much movement round a central empty stage’.²⁶⁹ While uncomplimentary, these were the comments of critics engaging with the dances as legitimate performances, with no indication that their efforts were undermined by prevailing cultural nationalist dogma.

Irish ballet engaged with political nationalism as well as cultural, employing the narrative component of ballet. Most prominently, Moriarty based *The Singer* on Pádraic Pearse’s play of the same name. Its choreography and staging conveyed its nationalist character, as the protagonist dances jigs and reels, while other dancers carry rifles and wear helmets. As the hero hears the cry of the people, he dances a frantic, excited dance including high jumps and kicks conveying his animation and agitation.²⁷⁰ The *Evening Echo* described the production:

²⁶⁷ *Connacht Sentinel*, 23rd Jul. 1940.

²⁶⁸ J. Gilmour, ‘The Cork Ballet Company’, *The Threshold* 1 (1) (Autumn, 1957), pp. 59-63; N. Davidson, ‘Ballet in Ireland’, *Dance and Dancers* (Jan. 1961) (copies in JDMAF).

²⁶⁹ *Press*, 22nd Apr. 1940.

²⁷⁰ JDMAF, ‘The Singer’.



Figure 5 – West Cork Ballad – *The Fiddler plays for the Shopkeeper's Daughter* (JDMAF, Ó Riada Collaborations).

The Singer... tells the story of a young Irish poet who, while dancing the dance of his youth, hears the cry of the oppressed people of Ireland. He is greatly disturbed and attempts to give expression to his feeling by writing patriotic songs. As he grows older, however, the call to duty becomes more insistent, and he finally joins the actual combatants in their struggle against the Gall. Exalted by his experience, but faced with defeat, he makes the supreme sacrifice to save the people he loves.²⁷¹

Although several pieces made up the evening's repertoire, it was the only performance to receive 'repeated curtain calls' and the only performance that the reviewer described in full. Patriotic narratives therefore resonated with Irish audiences.²⁷² Similarly, in 1966 a group named Rinnceoiri Tailteann, inspired by Moriarty, produced 'a ballet interpretation of the Easter Rising, using traditional Irish dance steps' for the Golden Jubilee. The production debuted at the Oireachtas.²⁷³ Its foremost organiser was Filis

²⁷¹ CCCA, HBS, PR/HB (2).

²⁷² CCCA, HBS, PR/HB (3).

²⁷³ *Star*, 6th Nov. 1965.



Figure 6 – Dancers Domy Reiter-Soffer and Julia Cotter in *West Cork Ballad as the Fiddler and Shopkeeper's Daughter*. Cotter performs an arabesque (JDMAF, Ó Riada Collaborations).

Mideach, winner of numerous step-dancing competitions, further indicating that competitions did not necessarily hinder original output.²⁷⁴

Commemorative State events incorporated traditional dancing's historical associations. The 25th and 50th anniversaries of 1916 both included céilidhe.²⁷⁵ Dissident Republican organisations used commemorative dances to promote their own agendas. Sinn Féin held a dance celebrating its Golden Jubilee in Omagh in 1955. Speakers praised the IRA and the people of Omagh for their part in the party's recent resurgence.²⁷⁶ The Limerick

²⁷⁴ *Sligo*, 4th Apr. 1959.

²⁷⁵ M. McCarthy, *Rising*, pp. 156; *Cuimhneachan Mhaineachan*, p. 4.

²⁷⁶ *Ulster*, 22nd Oct. 1955.

GAA celebrated the Fenian Rising's centenary in 1967 with a dance.²⁷⁷ Political groups used dances increasingly less often to make a political statements, although the practice was more common in Northern Ireland where Nationalists had less access to broadcasters.²⁷⁸ In 1955, the Anti-Partition League encouraged members arranging céilidhe to invite visiting speakers to describe conditions in Northern Ireland.²⁷⁹ Fine Gael demonstrated the limits of such tactics when it arranged for Presidential candidate Seán MacEoin to speak at a dance in Cork. The party hoped to illustrate its confidence in him and thus to increase 'the support he may receive in the province'.²⁸⁰ MacEoin lost in all but one Cork constituency. As radio and television became more effective mediums through which to disseminate political messages, dances had less political value. As social and fundraising events, they were fruitful, but this was at the expense of Irish dancing, which was less popular. Fianna Fáil's youth wing held a series of céilidhe between 1954 and 1955, but made heavy losses. They only planned one céilidh in 1956, focussing instead on modern dances.²⁸¹

Dissident Republicans paid lip service to Irish dancing, but their sincerity should not be exaggerated. A small number of IRA activists raise dancing in their personal narratives during the 1940s and 1950s, but less often than music.²⁸² Dance did provide a pastime and an expression of Irish identity for political prisoners. Eamonn Boyce described dancing as part of the féiseanna put on by prisoners in Belfast Jail. These dances, including the 'Siege of Ennis', were primarily Irish. They also held dance classes,

²⁷⁷ *Limerick*, 28th Jan. 1967.

²⁷⁸ Savage, *BBC*, pp. 13-14.

²⁷⁹ PRONI, 'Minutes of the Irish Anti/Partition League', D2994/4/3/1.

²⁸⁰ UCDA, FG, P39/C/34 (1).

²⁸¹ UCDA, FF, P176/386 (2); UCDA, FF, P176/386 (30); UCDA, FF, P176/386 (31); UCDA, FF, P176/389 (5).

²⁸² Behan, *Teems*, p. 153.

although like music these were temporary respites for largely disillusioned prisoners.²⁸³ Outside prison, supporters used céilidhe to raise funds for prisoners' dependents.²⁸⁴ This required attracting large numbers, and thus the question of genre was one of popularity over purity. At the 1968 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, delegates proposed permitting only traditional dances at party events:

The opposing faction point out that it was all very well to maintain this isolationist attitude but over the years Sinn Féin functions such as dances and socials had consistently lost money because of this head-in-the-sand approach. It was an equally primary duty of the Sinn Féin Cumann to obtain sufficient money to keep the party machine going, and the truth of the matter was that functions devoted solely to Irish cultural activities did not attract the crowds. A London delegate, Anthony O'Dowd, said that many of the dances objected to were not English in origin, the waltz came from Austria; the tango from Spain, and Ireland's ties with both these countries were long and honourable.²⁸⁵

Delegates voted against the motion, and the debate demonstrates the battle between ideology and the practicalities of engaging activists. The final rationale, that these were not examples of Anglicisation, is revealing in its contrivance and pragmatism. Ultimately, they prioritised funds.

The way in which political organisations used dance illustrates the inconsistent levels of concern for purity that prevailed throughout the period. Attracting revenue and attendants, even if less paramount than it had been before broadcasting, meant prioritising popular dances. With the end of the Gaelic League and GAA bans and the more relaxed attitude of Comhaltas, Irish dancing was less rigidly defined. Pretensions to purity, anti-commercialism and sexual modesty ebbed away after 1935. Even if

²⁸³ Boyce, *Insider*, pp. 53, 245, 253.

²⁸⁴ *Connacht*, 7th Nov. 1959.

²⁸⁵ PRONI, HA/32/2/13.

competitions imposed a degree of homogeneity, they did not prevent choreographic innovations. Indeed, for Moriarty and others it arguably encouraged them.

Commercialism, too, did not inhibit traditional dancing, but rather supported it through corporate sponsorship and State aid.

ⁱ Foxtrot: Smooth dance characterised by long, continuous flowing movements.

ⁱⁱ Waltz: Smooth, progressive ballroom dance in triple time.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jig: Lively dance in eight-bar sections, performed in a group or solo.

^{iv} Double jig: Distinguished from a jig by two groups of triple quavers as opposed to a crotchet followed by a quaver.

^v Quadrilles: Intricate group dance of four couples performing set figures.

^{vi} Reel: Solo or group dance, performed in soft shoes, in eight bar sections. Each step commences with the right foot, followed by a repeat of the whole step commencing with the left foot.

^{vii} Hornpipe: Solo or group dance, usually in common time at a lively tempo, with a dotted rhythm and accents on beats one and three. Consists of a sequence of step dances.

^{viii} High Caul Cap: Reel for four couples. Named after a symbol for the link between mother and child, believed in folklore to be a good omen that prevented drowning.

^{ix} Bridge of Athlone: Jig in which multiple couples in two lines form a 'bridge', referring to that across the River Shannon in Athlone, an important scene in the Jacobite Wars. Each odd couple and the couple immediately below them form a set.

^x Walls of Limerick: Depiction of an important scene in the Jacobite Wars. Reel for an even number couples. Pairs of couples face each other.

^{xi} Siege of Ennis: Jig named after a battle in Ennis, Co. Clare. Four dancers face each other. Dancers are organised in partners standing side by side.

^{xii} Three hand reel: A reel for three participants.

^{xiii} One Step: Ballroom dance with syncopated rhythms.

^{xiv} Napoleon/Bonaparte's Retreat: Set dance in hornpipe time.

^{xv} The Jockey at the Fair: Set dance in jig time.

^{xvi} Jive: A lively style of dance performed to swing music.

^{xvii} Tango: Ballroom dance characterised by marked rhythms and postures and abrupt pauses.

^{xviii} Highland Fling: Scottish dance consisting of a series of complex steps.

^{xix} Jitterbug: Fast dance performed to swing music.

^{xx} Cake-Walk: Dance developed from late nineteenth-century "Prize Walks" on black slave plantations in the United States.

^{xxi} Varsoviennne: Dance combining the waltz, mazurka, and polka.

^{xxii} Charleston: Lively dance involving turning the knees inwards and kicking out the ankles.

6

‘The flute would play only “the Protestant Boys”’: Music and Unionism, 1848-1972

I

‘For England is now allied with the Pope’: Unionist Musical Culture, 1848-1921

Nationalist appeals to Protestants concentrated, first, on Protestant nationalists such as Wolfe Tone and Thomas Davis. In this conception, Protestant nationalists understood that their nationality was above their religion, and their Irish patriotism was without question. Second, nationalists appealed to an ancient Gaelic culture, shared by all Irishmen, including the Irish language and traditional music and dance. By comparing nationalist and unionist musical culture, this section seeks to test those claims.

Nationalism and unionism shared a common cultural context and much common material, but often not in the manner suggested in nationalist rhetoric. The comparison also highlights how nationalism and Protestant fears thereof encouraged explicitly defiant unionist musical cultures.

Unionist politics was concentrated where the Protestant population was highest, namely Ulster, increasingly so as Home Rule campaigners sought Catholic support.¹ Outside Ulster, Ireland was overwhelmingly nationalist, but prominent pockets of unionism survived in Cork, Dublin, and notably Trinity College. The Home Rule debate’s increasing prominence in British politics encouraged a mass unionist movement.

¹ Foster, *Modern*, pp. 386-387.

Unionists in Ulster established the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) in 1895. Their campaign against Home Rule saw the lawyer Edward Carson become UUP leader in 1910. On 28 September 1912 ('Ulster Day') he and thousands of others signed the 'Ulster Covenant', a pledge against Home Rule. However, the movement was radicalising and arming beyond the leadership's control, notably in the formation the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in 1913, whose stated intent was to shelter Ulster from Home Rule by force if necessary.²

The most prominent and explicitly unionist musical culture was that of the Orange Order. Large sections of this chapter focus on its music, but not exclusively, and it is important to note that the Order never included more than a significant minority of Protestants. The Order traces its origins to violence between Protestant and Catholic agrarian groups in 1795, after which a group of Protestants (not all of whom partook in the violence) formed the first Orange Lodge. It grew rapidly, becoming a national organisation in March 1798.³ Most members were small farmers and workers, but their leaders were more often industrialists or landowners.⁴ Like other fraternal and friendly societies, the Order had strict beliefs and ceremonies, specifically centred on Protestantism, including banning Catholics (just as the Hibernians banned Protestants). Nor could women join, although there were separate female lodges.⁵ The ruling body, the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, sat above a hierarchy of branch, district, and county lodges. Two senior organisations, the Royal Black Preceptory and Royal Arch Purple,

² T. Bowman, *Carson's Army: The Ulster Volunteer Force. 1910-1922* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 3, 205; A. Jackson, *Sir Edward Carson* (Dundalk, 1993), pp. 35-36.

³ D. MacRaild, *Faith, Fraternity and Fighting: The Orange Order and Irish Migrants in Northern England, c. 1850-1920* (Liverpool, 2005), pp. 1-3.

⁴ Gibbon, *Origins of Ulster Unionism*, pp. 85, 127; Miller, *Queen's Rebels*, p. 60.

⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, p. 82.

were also associated with the Order.⁶ Branches of the Order provided insurance and financial support for members, but their most visible activities were the annual July 12th parades commemorating the Battle of the Boyne. Boyne parades began in 1778, and the Order began holding its own in 1796, thereafter becoming synonymous with the ‘Twelfth’ celebrations.⁷ The Order also commemorated the Gunpowder Plot, unsurprising given its connotations of Catholic attacks on Protestant government.⁸ It opposed Home Rule, although Thomas Sloan’s Independent Orange Order, formed in 1903, took a different stance. Sloan condemned unionist elites, and was open to supporting Home Rule, but the Independent Order was always a minority.⁹ Additionally, the Apprentice Boys of Derry held annual parades commemorating the Siege of Derry. Every December they marked the anniversary of the shutting of the gates at the start of the siege and every August the anniversary of the city’s relief. The first Apprentice Boys club was formed in 1714. In 1844, the Apprentice Boys organised formally, and in 1856 formed a central committee to coordinate parades.¹⁰ Like the Orange Order, the Apprentice Boys saw their celebrations adopted across Ulster during the campaign against Home Rule.¹¹

Parades often brought participants into physical conflict with Catholics. The government temporarily banned so-called ‘party processions’ in 1832. It did so permanently after multiple deaths during armed clashes between the Orange Order and

⁶ Museum of Orange Heritage Archive (henceforth MOHA), *Grand Lodge of Ireland Minute Book of Proceedings* (Henceforth GLIMB), 15th Nov. 1848.

⁷ Miller, *Queen’s Rebels*, p. 33; Blackstock, ‘Invisible Mass’, p. 98.

⁸ PRONI, ‘Minute Book of the Meetings of Aghnacloy Black Preceptory’, D2108/3.

⁹ Foster, *Modern*, p. 440.

¹⁰ I. McBride, *The Siege of Derry in Ulster Protestant Mythology* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 11-49.

¹¹ *Newsletter*, 13th Aug. 1885.

Catholic Ribbonmen at Dolly's Brae in 1849.¹² The Party Processions Act (1850) prohibited 'playing music or singing songs which may be calculated or intended to provoke animosity between different classes of her majesty's subjects' and heavily restricted opportunities for unionist musical performance.¹³ It became a major unionist grievance and further politicised parades. Even before 1850, bourgeois Orange leaders were attempting to balance enthusiasm for the Twelfth with a respectable public image.¹⁴ They did not cancel the Twelfth entirely after 1850, but encouraged lodges to hold indoor meetings and church services.¹⁵ They also campaigned against the Act.¹⁶ The Apprentice Boys held processions with bands and music in spite of the Act (prompting a police response) and sought to distance themselves from the Orange Order's poor reputation, insisting that their members bore 'no similarity whatever to Orange lodges' and their 'bloodthirsty' members.¹⁷ Such distinctions highlight that, whatever their similarities, these were different organisations.

The individual who most prominently opposed the Party Processions Act was William Johnston (1829-1902), a Trinity graduate, Orange Lodge Master, and hardliner.¹⁸ As a Grand Lodge member, he was unique in that he was both sufficiently senior to attract serious attention, and willing to go further than his colleagues in testing the Act's limits. Between 1865 and 1867 he made incrementally more serious incursions on the prohibition.¹⁹ Consequently, he was sentenced to one month's imprisonment in March

¹² *Newsletter*, 23rd Oct. 1849; *Kerry*, 18th Jul. 1849; *Kerry*, 19th Sept. 1849.

¹³ *Report of the Special Committee of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland* (Dublin, 1849), pp. 3, 33.

¹⁴ PRONI, 'Primate Beresford Papers', D3279/C/31/1; *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland* (Dublin, 1850).

¹⁵ MOHA, GLIMB, 24th Nov. 1858.

¹⁶ MOHA, Box 49 Shelf 4E, Memorials of Orangeism.

¹⁷ *Examiner*, 14th Aug. 1861; *Drogheda Conservative*, 24th Dec. 1870; *Newsletter*, 19th Dec. 1860.

¹⁸ MOHA, GLIMB, 27th May 1858; McClelland, *Johnston*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁹ MOHA, Box 40 Shelf 4E, William Johnston of Ballykilbeg.

1867.²⁰ Johnston's campaign revitalised the movement, and enhanced his political career, evidenced in his election to Parliament in 1868.²¹ He brought the Act to debate in the Commons and, despite filibusters, government delays, and his own lack of experience, Parliament repealed the Act in April 1872.²²

Nationalism and unionism operated in a common soundscape. Fraternal and friendly societies across the UK used bands to raise their profile, particularly as instruments (if not musicians) were becoming cheaper.²³ The Orange Order and Apprentice Boys (like the Hibernians) did so extensively to promote themselves. Nationalists seeking to present themselves as a legitimate alternative to the British State copied its ceremonies: bands at military parades; buglers at military funerals; commemorations and other 'State' occasions that concluded with the national anthem. Unionists did likewise, but presented themselves as exemplary British representatives rather than an Irish alternative. Print culture, too, catered for both nationalist and unionist musical culture. There was no direct unionist equivalent to the *Nation's* intellectual influences or success. Nonetheless, unionist organisations printed numerous songbooks. Finally, like nationalists, unionists encountered music in churches. However, as musicologist Helen Phelan writes, Protestant hymns had more 'full-blooded' qualities than less rousing Catholic equivalents.²⁴

²⁰ *Examiner*, 2nd Mar. 1867.

²¹ Killyleagh Lodge 547's membership fell 1860-1865, then increased by 50 per cent 1865-1867. PRONI, 'Minute Book Killyleagh Orange Lodge', D4367/1/2.

²² McClelland, *Johnston*, p. 7; *Hansard*, HC, 11th Apr. 1872, Vol. 210, C. 1128; *Hansard*, HL, 7th May 1872, Vol. 211, C. 364.

²³ Cordery, *British Friendly Societies*, pp. 43-44, 82.

²⁴ H. Phelan, 'Hymn and Irish Catholicism: A New Perspective', *The Furrow* 53 (2) (Feb. 2002), p. 91.

Unionists drew upon a range of music. Where nationalists reappropriated or parodied British patriotic songs like ‘Rule Britannia’, unionists used them unchanged and without irony. *Lays for Patriots*, an Orange songbook, included ‘Rule Britannia’, which celebrated British imperial dominance (‘Britannia rules the waves’), and the national anthem ‘God Save the King’.²⁵ Aided by Protestant hymnology’s martial qualities, unionists used hymns more prevalently than nationalists, with the possible exception of the Hibernians. Both the title and lyrics of ‘Onwards, Christian Soldiers’ resonated with contemporary Protestant experiences:

Long as Earth endureth
Men that faith will hold,
Kingdoms, nations, Empires,
In destruction rolled.
Onwards Christian Soldiers.

In the context of ongoing nationalist campaigns, the image of ‘men of faith’ standing up for Empire and King had an obvious appeal for unionists, who often employed the hymn during marches.²⁶ Its processional rhythm made it suitable for marching (more so than Catholic alternatives), suggesting that musically speaking Protestantism, via these hymns, was easily incorporated into unionism.²⁷ ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’ has similar features:

O God, our help in ages past.
Our hope for years to come.
Our shelter from the stormy blast.
And our eternal home!

Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;

²⁵ *Lays for Patriots* (Dublin, 1855).

²⁶ *Newsletter*, 13th Aug. 1895.

²⁷ ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* <http://www.hymnology.co.uk/o/onward,-christian-soldiers> (6th Oct. 2016).

Sufficient is thine aim alone,
And our defence is sure.²⁸

Although referring to God's 'throne', the term also carries monarchist connotations. Like 'Onwards, Christian Soldiers', 'O God Our Help in Ages Past' deals with themes of siege and deliverance. It subsequently refers to a 'mighty fortress is our God', pertinent for unionists fortifying themselves and their 'eternal home' from nationalism. Longer notes (dotted crotchets) emphasise the lyrics denoting these themes ('shelter', 'eternal', 'throne'), while the E Major Key and the perfect cadence (where one would expect the more religious plagal cadence in a hymn) create an uplifting, defiant tone.²⁹ Its popularity suggests that nationalism, far from inspiring an alliance of Orange and Green (as Davis hoped), reinforced Protestant identities emphasising defiance and loyalty, including through the appropriation of hymns. Indeed, 'O God Our Help in Ages Past' was synonymous with unionism. A writer in the *Morning Post* in 1921 described it as 'entwined with the record of Ulster loyalty'.³⁰

Orange songs, those specifically written for and performed by the Orange Order, often labelled 'party songs', constituted the most overtly unionist songs. These fall into three sub-categories: historical songs, anti-Catholic/anti-rebel songs, and comic songs. Historical Orange songs drew upon themes similar to nationalist ballads, for instance commemorating historical figures and events. Rather than the 1798 rebellion, unionists celebrated the victory of William of Orange at the Boyne. 'Boyne Water' describes William preparing to cross the River Boyne. William is outnumbered, but he and his 'brave boys' prevent their enemies committing 'open murder'. The song celebrates

²⁸ *The Twelfth* (Belfast, 1975).

²⁹ *Music for Hymns* (Belfast, 1990), p. 752.

³⁰ PRONI, 'Press Cuttings', D1415/A/11.

bravery, battle, and masculinity ('brave boys'). It also praises the martyrdom of the Duke of Schomberg, who fell in the battle.³¹ Nationalists and unionists therefore employed matching musical devices, if differing politics. While the United Irishmen popularised ballads such as the 'Shan Van Vocht', 'Boyne Water' was first used by the Yeomanry corps, a civilian militia formed to counter them.³² Musical notation for 'Boyne Water' suggests that, like nationalist balladry, the most popular songs were those employing simple rhythms and pauses to encourage communal renditions of uplifting sections, not unlike patriotic music hall songs.³³ The song's political connotations are illustrated in writer John Banim's appropriation of the title for his novel *The Boyne Water*, depicting a doomed love affair across the sectarian divide.³⁴

Like 'Memory of the Dead', unionist historical songs encouraged listeners to emulate, as well as celebrate, heroic characters. 'Derry's Walls' describes the Siege of Derry (1688) and encourages listeners to: 'work and don't surrender/But come when duty calls/No Surrender, onward march,/For Derry's maiden walls'.³⁵ 'The Protestant Boys' was another popular example:

The Protestant boys are loyal and true,
Stout-hearted in battle and stout-hearted too,
The Protestant boys are true to the last,
And faithful and peaceful when danger has passed.

When James half a bigot, and more of a knave,
When masses and Frenchmen the land could enslave;
The Protestant boys for liberty drew,
And showed with the Orange their Banner of Blue.
And Derry well,
Their might can tell,
Who first in their ranks did the Orange display;

³¹ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, pp. 84-87.

³² *Freeman's*, 6th Mar. 1823; *Freeman's*, 25th Feb. 1825.

³³ *Orange Standard* (Glasgow, c. 1930), p. 18.

³⁴ J. Banim, *The Boyne Water* (Dublin, 1865).

³⁵ *Dolly's Brae* (n.p., c. 1912).

The Boyne had no shyers,
 And Aughrim no flyers,
 And Protestant boys still carried the day.

This victorious narrative precedes a declaration: ‘And ever their cause we’ll uphold-
 /The cause of the true and trusted and bold’. Like the ‘true men’ of nationalist balladry,
 those willing to emulate 1688 are above their fellow subjects: ‘Though fashions are
 changed and the loyal are few’.³⁶ Although its authorship is unclear, newspaper
 coverage suggests that the Orange Order popularised the song in the 1820s.³⁷

Nationalist balladry occasionally derided unionism, but nominally welcomed
 Protestants. Nationalists portrayed the 1798 rebellion as a moment of Catholic and
 Protestant unity, a representation that endured. However, Orange musical depictions of
 1798 were explicitly anti-nationalist and anti-Catholic, for example ‘Croppies Lie
 Down’:

We soldiers of Erin, so proud of the name,
 Will raise upon rebels and Frenchmen our fame;
 We’ll fight to the last in the honour and cause,
 And guard our religion, our freedom, and laws;
 We’ll fight for our country, our king, and his crown,
 And make all the traitors and croppies lie down.
 Down, down, croppies lie down.

The rebels so bold – when they’ve none to oppose -
 To houses and hay-stacks and terrible foes;
 They murder poor parsons, and also their wives,
 But soldiers at once make them run for their lives;
 And wherever we march, thro’ the country or town,
 In ditches or cellars, the croppies lie down.
 Down, down, croppies lie down.³⁸

³⁶ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 92.

³⁷ *Newsletter*, 17th Jul. 1829.

³⁸ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 28.

Unlike law-abiding unionists, nationalist ‘traitors’ murder civilians. The simple rhythm creates a memorable tune, while the dynamics progress from *piano* (quiet) at the start of each verse to *fortissimo* (very loud) on ‘croppies lie down’. After a pause ‘Down, down, croppies lie down’ returns to *piano*, providing a solemn, reflective, and determined reassertion of the singer’s power over traitorous rebels.³⁹ The song originated during the rebellion. Newspapers first report it being sung in 1798.⁴⁰ It was taken up, like ‘Boyne Water’, by the Yeomanry.⁴¹ Where ‘Croppies Lie Down’ focused on rebels, ‘The Boys of Sandy Row’ conflated rebels and Catholics:

The gathering Papists swarming round this ancient loyal town,
They tried you know, not long ago, to pull the Bible down,
And to destroy it root and branch, they often have combined,
But from Sandy Row we made them fly like chaff before the wind.⁴²

The song dehumanises ‘papists’ (a derogatory term for Catholics) as a swarm with a lawless history of seeking to ‘destroy’ the Bible. The dynamics, *forte* (loud) and *con spirito* (with spirit), convey defiance and anger, while pauses at the start of each verse facilitate communal singing.⁴³ Other examples are more explicit, including ‘We’ll Tighten the Rope Around the Pope’s Throat’ and ‘Kick the Pope’.⁴⁴ Nationalist narratives of noble and purportedly non-sectarian rebellions were controverted by unionist songs in which nationalism was lawless, violent, and hostile to Protestantism.

³⁹ K. Kambra, *Croppies Lie Down* (London, 1798).

⁴⁰ *Freeman’s*, 2nd Jun. 1798.

⁴¹ *Freeman’s*, 29th Aug. 1816.

⁴² *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 32.

⁴³ *Orange Standard*, p. 17.

⁴⁴ *Freeman’s*, 11th Sept. 1900; *Nation*, 20th Jul. 1867.

Comic songs were belittling of opponents or self-parodying. ‘Daniel O’Connell in Purgatory’ and ‘Old Father Dan’ depicted the Repeal leader in purgatory (the intermediate state of Catholic theology between death and heaven).⁴⁵ ‘Old Father Dan’ began:

I once knew a dodger, whose name was Father Dan,
But to Purgatory he’s gone long ago,
To atone for the sins he committed all for scran,
He is living with his Uncle Tom below.

Then square up your shovels in a row,
Tumble up the old sod with the hoe, boys, O;
There is no more rent for ould Father Dan,
He’s gone where the rest all will go.⁴⁶

The song questions O’Connell’s integrity: he pursued his career for financial gain (‘scran’, ‘rent’), while the setting of purgatory and the absurd image of his supporters attempting to dig him out satirises his Catholicism. Others were self-parodying. In ‘Carson’s Orange Parrot’, a parrot on Carson’s shoulder yells ‘No Surrender’, a slogan associated with the Siege of Derry, when it is fed, caricaturing unionist defiance.⁴⁷ ‘Carson’s Orange Parrot’ was frequently reappropriated, illustrating the appeal of its humour.⁴⁸ ‘The Ould Orange Flute’ dealt with these and more serious themes. It describes an Orange flautist who ‘married a Papish’, ‘turned Papish himself’, and then fled with his ‘ould Orange flute’:

At the chapel on Sundays to atone for past deeds,
He said Pater and Aves and counted his beads,
Till after some time at the Priest’s own desire,
He went with his ould flute to play in the choir;

⁴⁵ *Lays*.

⁴⁶ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 93.

⁴⁷ PRONI, ‘Ulster Unionist Women’s Council Papers’, D2688/1/10.

⁴⁸ *The Twelfth* (Belfast, 1971); *The Loyalist Song Book 1690-1990: Tercentenary Edition* (Glasgow, 1990); *Orange Loyalist Songs* (Belfast, 1971).

He went with his ould flute to play in the mass,
 And the instrument shivered and sighed, oh, alas!
 When he blew it and fingered and made a great noise,
 The flute would play only "The Protestant Boys".

He threw his flute in the holy water, then the priest threw it in the fire, but it still played Orange songs ('Croppies Lie Down', 'Kick the Pope', 'Boyne Water', 'The Protestant Boys').⁴⁹ The three beat rhythm, with a repeated broken tonic chord and four bar phrases conveys a light-hearted, merry quality. Plagal cadences accompany the song titles that end each verse, underlining their religious themes.⁵⁰ The bewildered protagonist's unconscious Orange tenacity provides another example of self-parody. The Catholic Church required that couples in mixed marriages raise their children as Catholics (a position that it formalised in 1908, but which had been a de facto requirement since the eighteenth century).⁵¹ Moreover the Home Rule campaign's alliance with the Catholic Church and Hibernians, and the involvement of priests in the Gaelic League, did little to discourage Protestant fears that Home Rule meant 'Rome Rule'.⁵² Orangemen confronted these fears in comedic song, belittling and disarming what they otherwise regarded as a genuine threat to Protestantism.

In common with nationalism, unionist songs used existing tunes to accelerate their adoption. 'Song for the Anniversary of the Shutting of the Gates' used the well-known Scottish tune of 'Auld Lang Syne'.⁵³ 'The Protestant Boys' was set to a marching tune,

⁴⁹ *Lays*.

⁵⁰ *Orange Standard*, p. 13.

⁵¹ Hepburn, *Catholic*, p. 27; R. M. Lee, 'Intermarriage, Conflict and Social Control In Ireland: The Decree "Ne Temere"', *Economic and Social Review*, 17 (1) (1985), p. 14.

⁵² Hepburn, *Catholic*, p. 41; J. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, 1987), p. 120.

⁵³ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 16.

‘Lilliburleros’, reinforcing its martial quality and aiding its dissemination.⁵⁴ New Orange songs regularly recycled pre-existing Orange tunes. *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs* (1907) contained four songs to the tune of ‘Boyne Water’.⁵⁵ Unionists also extensively recycled ‘John Brown’s Body’, an American song promising to ‘hang’ political opponents on ‘a sour apple tree’.⁵⁶ Home Rule, Gladstone and Redmond all faced the sour apple tree, demonstrating the ease with which unionism adapted songs to new circumstances, similar to the many reinventions of the ‘Shan Van Vocht’.⁵⁷ This and ‘Auld Lang Syne’ also point to cultural interaction with a transnational Ulster-Scots diaspora, including that in America. Just as nationalists incorporated popular American songs like ‘Tramp, tramp, tramp the boys are marching’ (in ‘God Save Ireland’), unionists appropriated American imports. They also adapted British patriotic songs. ‘Volunteer Hymn’, written for the UVF in 1914, used the tune of ‘God Save the King’.⁵⁸ Thus, the UVF associated itself with a wider British, imperial ideal. Constitutional nationalists also associated themselves with an imperial purpose, notably during First World War recruitment campaigns. They also appropriated British patriotic tunes in order to assert their authority over them. Unionists embraced imperial ideals more wholeheartedly, but equally in the context of a unionist movement that increasingly criticised British governments, the unionist use of British patriotic tunes positioned them as the true representatives of those ideals. Amidst the Home Rule Crisis, a vanguard of Ulstermen externalised Britain and the government from their own patriotic endeavours. Unionists also asserted control over nationalists by appropriating their songs. ‘Who Fears to Speak of ‘88’ asks:

⁵⁴ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 21, 82-83, 144.

⁵⁶ *Newsletter*, 6th Aug. 1862; *Examiner*, 8th Jul. 1864.

⁵⁷ *Kerry*, 14th May 1881; *Freeman’s*, 7th Nov. 1906; *Freeman’s*, 18th Jan. 1913.

⁵⁸ PRONI, ‘Correspondence and Newscuttings etc. Relating to the UVF, the Enniskillen Horse and the Ulster Home Guard’, D2023/11/1.

Who fears to speak of eighty-eight
And brim the cup of those
Who nobly closed old Derry's gate
Against her cunning foes?

Instead of the men of 1798, the adapted version of 'Memory of the Dead' encourages Orangemen to emulate those who 'closed old Derry's gate'. That is reinforced (as is its masculine quality) in the refrain, which concludes: 'you boys, like true boys, her Glories will recall'.⁵⁹ The themes and qualities of the original survived, but its allegiance was reversed, giving unionists ownership of a potent nationalist symbol. Both political traditions drew on similar songs and ideals. The politics, rather than the cultural material, separated them.

Nationalist songwriters were a mixture of writers and rebels. Unionist songwriters, contrastingly, were predominantly senior Orangemen, often with military backgrounds. William Blacker was a yeomanry officer who brought ammunition to the Protestant Peep o' Day Boys. He was a founding Orange Order member.⁶⁰ Blacker wrote several songs, including 'No Surrender', which took the Siege of Derry as its subject and was unsurprisingly popular with the Apprentice Boys.⁶¹ Rev. John Graham was also in the yeomanry. He fought during 1798, and became an Orange Order County Grand Master.⁶² John Pitt Kennedy commanded a force in Dublin during the 1848 uprising and financed the supply of arms to Orangemen to defend the city.⁶³ Edward Harper was Grand Master of the London Orange Lodge.⁶⁴ William Johnston also wrote songs.

⁵⁹ *Lays*.

⁶⁰ *Kerry*, 1st Dec. 1855; *Dublin University Magazine* 17 (101) (May 1841).

⁶¹ *Lays; A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 14; *Examiner*, 30th Apr. 1869.

⁶² *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 16; *Newsletter*, 20th Dec. 1860; *Kerry*, 1st Jan. 1840.

⁶³ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 25; *Examiner*, 3rd Dec. 1849.

⁶⁴ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, pp. 28, 75, 102; *Freeman's*, 31st Jul. 1867.

Although, as these examples suggest, it was a largely male preserve; songwriting was more open to women than other political activities from which they were explicitly excluded (notably voting and parading), if only to a few from privileged backgrounds. Novelist Charlotte Elizabeth closely associated herself with the Orange Order, and her husband was an army officer.⁶⁵ Her best-known song was ‘The Maiden City’.⁶⁶ Lady Arthur Hill’s connections were with the Unionist Party rather than the Orange Order. She was a vocal supporter of unionist politicians and the Presbyterian Church.⁶⁷ As well as singing and performing, she composed the music of ‘For Union and King’.⁶⁸

Like nationalist equivalents, unionist music at parades (especially of the Orange Order and Apprentice Boys) created an impressive spectacle. Music’s political value is reflected in its financial cost. For Killyleagh Orange Lodge, hiring a band for the Twelfth was its largest one-off expense in 1903. Bands were in high demand, and that cost doubled by 1907. By 1913, its reserves having eroded, it could not afford a band at all.⁶⁹ Press reports reflected the effect of bands and large crowds. One, commenting on the Twelfth in Enniskillen in 1908, remarked: ‘when it is remembered that there were almost 100 bands... some guess might be made as to the dimension of the procession’.⁷⁰ Bands also gave the impression of a ‘military’ display.⁷¹ In July 1819, the *Freeman’s Journal* described an ‘assembly of Orangemen’ in Westmeath who ‘marched in military order from the court-house to church, with colours flying and a band playing “The

⁶⁵ *Collection of Orange Ballads* (Belfast, 1907); *Press*, 13th Jul. 1937.

⁶⁶ *Nation*, 17th Nov. 1849.

⁶⁷ *Evening*, 11th Sept. 1907; *Newsletter*, 19th Sept. 1918.

⁶⁸ *Newsletter*, 19th Sept. 1885.

⁶⁹ PRONI, D4367/1/2.

⁷⁰ PRONI, ‘Volume of press cuttings from local papers’, D1327/21/7.

⁷¹ PRONI, ‘Letter from Henry Briggs of the Lecale District Orange Lodge to members regarding ‘Twelfth’ demonstrations in Comber, 23rd Jun. 1913’, D3815/A/80.

Protestant Boys”’.⁷² These were mainly fife and drum bands, although the large, loud lambeg drum was also synonymous with the Twelfth.⁷³ These drums, the Order claimed, originated in the armies of William of Orange, although their actual origins are unclear.⁷⁴

Advanced nationalist music amalgamated nationalism, socialism, and anti-imperialism. Similarly, unionist parades and commemorations reflected the ease with which musical performance synthesised the political, religious and national. In 1872, bands commemorating the Twelfth in Cavan played the national anthem, ‘Boyne Water’, and ‘The Protestant Boys’.⁷⁵ Cathedral Services marking the Siege of Derry were dominated by hymns and ‘God Save the King’.⁷⁶ Unlike notionally non-sectarian nationalist events, hymns marked these commemorations as religious services. ‘God Save the King’ implied that they were national celebrations, akin to army bands that played the national anthem at State commemorations. Unionist music associated unionist politics with national and religious ideals. As in nationalism, these performances created a broad church of ideals, but the political language was markedly different. Reflecting their popularity, these performances increasingly characterised other aspects of Orange life, notably when bands played at the opening of new halls.⁷⁷ Music and dancing were also important, if more understated, in Orange social life. William Johnston, for instance, recorded travelling to lodges specifically to attend social dances.⁷⁸

⁷² *Freeman’s*, 16th Jul. 1819.

⁷³ *Newsletter*, 14th Aug. 1894; *Donegal*, 24th Oct. 1908.

⁷⁴ G. Montgomery and J. Whitten, *The Order on Parade* (Belfast, 1995), p. 5; *The Twelfth* (Belfast, 1985), p. 15.

⁷⁵ *Freeman’s*, 13th Jul. 1872.

⁷⁶ *Kerry*, 20th Aug. 1856.

⁷⁷ PRONI, ‘William Johnston of Ballykilbeg Diary (henceforth WJD)’, 27th Jun. 1868, D880/2/20.

⁷⁸ PRONI, WJD, 27th Jun. 1866, D880/2/18; PRONI, WJD, 21st Feb. 1867, D880/2/19.

On rare occasions, Orange bands were courteous towards nationalist counterparts. In Killeshandon in September 1906, an Orange band ‘played home’ a nationalist band ‘as friends and gentlemen’ after a farm and garden show.⁷⁹ These non-political environments should not suggest that Orange musical performance was less provocative elsewhere. In 1849, the Ballymoney Union reported that Protestant ‘children were encouraged to sing Orange songs to the annoyance of the Roman Catholics’ by their parents.⁸⁰ Music also mapped political territory. Each August, Apprentice Boys bands led a ritualised procession around Derry’s city walls to the Cathedral and then to Walker’s Pillar, a statue commemorating Rev. George Walker, Governor of city during the Siege of Derry. Bands played ‘No Surrender’, ‘Boyne Water’, and the national anthem.⁸¹ The route marked the territory they controlled, the music asserted what that control entailed: Derry’s history of Protestant resistance defined it as British. Others targeted Catholic areas directly. In Armagh in 1913, an Orange band marched past the ‘nationalist quarter’, ‘cursing’ the Pope and shouting ‘no Home Rule’.⁸² The nationalist press referred to such actions as ‘invasions’.⁸³ If unionist musical responses to nationalism were defiant, they were also deliberately confrontational.

Both nationalists and unionists used music to compete with opponents over control of auditory spaces. At an Independent Orange Order meeting in 1905 in Dublin, the chairman explained the group’s support for both Home Rule and the Union. Nationalist protesters interrupted throughout, despite his calls for Protestants and Catholics to

⁷⁹ *Independent*, 18th Sept. 1906.

⁸⁰ PRONI, ‘Minute Book of the Ballymoney Union’, BG/5/A/5.

⁸¹ *Independent*, 11th Aug. 1906; *Newsletter*, 14th Aug. 1882; *Drogheda Conservative*, 24th Dec. 1870.

⁸² *Dundalk*, 11th Oct. 1913.

⁸³ *Freeman’s*, 26th Feb. 1849; *Star*, 20th Jul. 1912.

‘stretch hands across the Boyne’. At the meeting’s conclusion, Thomas Sloan asked the audience to sing the national anthem. Most obliged, but a crowd outside responded with ‘God Save Ireland’ and ‘A Nation Once Again’.⁸⁴ Whether the hall was defined as a unionist or nationalist space rested on the relative gusto of the rival crowds. In this instance music sufficed rather than violence, but in Belfast on the Twelfth in 1901 police were required to separate Orangemen singing ‘Rule Britannia’ and nationalists singing ‘Wearing of the Green’. ‘In a few instances,’ reported the *Kerry Sentinel*, ‘the Orangemen tried to force their way into the Nationalist quarters with the object of raising a row, but the police held them back’.⁸⁵ In these circumstances, crowds invaded one another’s territory with music even if they were physically cut-off. When Trinity College students staging an anti-Boer demonstration in 1899 met nationalist counterdemonstrators, they retreated behind the College walls. There, they sang ‘loyalist songs’ including the national anthem, while those outside ‘sang nationalist songs’.⁸⁶ Rival crowds in Monaghan showed less restraint on Armistice Day in 1918. When a Conservative Band concluded a concert with ‘God Save the King’, Sinn Féin protesters sang the ‘Soldier’s Song’ and a ‘scuffle’ ensued.⁸⁷ Just as alternative strands of nationalism used music to compete over political space, so too did rival unionists. In 1903 in Derry, Independent Orange Order bands played constantly to interrupt speakers at an Apprentice Boys commemoration, disrupting the latter’s control over the immediate political space.⁸⁸ With opponents both internal and external, unionists and nationalists interacted with space and with political opponents in a strikingly similar manner. These similarities problematise any neat distinctions between the two cultures.

⁸⁴ *Independent*, 13th Dec. 1905.

⁸⁵ *Sentinel*, 17th Jul. 1901.

⁸⁶ *Freeman’s*, 20th Oct. 1899.

⁸⁷ *Anglo-Celt*, 16th Nov. 1918.

⁸⁸ *Donegal*, 15th Aug. 1903.

The two traditions drew on the same musical practices, including marching bands, communal singing, and anthems that defined political and national allegiances.

The notoriety of the clashes at Dolly's Brae, short and long-term, is encompassed in the popularity and longevity of the ballad of the same name. There are several versions.⁸⁹

One, quoted below, incorporates the episode into a tradition of Protestant resistance. It accuses Catholics of setting out to 'shoot and slay our Orangemen'. The Orangemen marched 'like William, Prince of yore':

As o'er the Brae we did proceed, the road being very bare,
The Ribbonmen advantage took and fired upon our rere;
Like lions stout we wheeled about, with powder and with ball,
The volley we sent into them caused scores of them to fall.

The song elevates a violent clash to the level of any victory of William of Orange. Far from a riot, it was a victory for Orangemen who faced their enemy like 'lions'.⁹⁰

The resultant Party Processions Act restricted unionist musical performance even more than that of nationalists. Orange leaders were reluctant to break the law, but they demonstrated a willingness to operate near its limits in order to 'perpetuate the spirit of Orangeism'.⁹¹ In 1867 they supported a meeting against disestablishing the Church of Ireland at which bands played 'Boyne Water' and 'The Protestant Boys', transposing their musical culture (including songs likely to 'provoke animosity') into the new

⁸⁹ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, p. 67; PRONI, 'Wm. Johnston Pro-Orange Anti-Catholic Songs', D880/7/4B.

⁹⁰ *A Collection of Orange and Protestant Songs*, pp. 65-66.

⁹¹ MOHA, GLIMB, 26th May 1858.

legislative environment.⁹² They also drew attention to ‘party music’ at nationalist events (e.g. laying the foundation stone of Daniel O’Connell’s statue) which they felt contravened the law, but which police tolerated.⁹³ Individual lodges went further. Lodges held processions with music in Belfast in 1859, and in Down bands played outside an indoor prayer meeting. The meeting was one of those commemorating the Twelfth that the Grand Lodge encouraged as a substitute for parades. The demonstration thus directly challenged the Orange leadership’s instructions.⁹⁴ In Gilford in 1863 police intervened when Orange bands played ‘The Protestant Boys’ and ‘Croppies Lie Down’ in procession.⁹⁵ Broadly, however, police only enforced prosecutions under procession laws when demonstrators brandished weapons or used violence (e.g. 1861 when Orangemen ‘with music, drums and fife’ in Derrymacash brandished firearms).⁹⁶

William Johnston’s campaign against procession laws used music prominently. Johnston engaged with unionist music from an early age, writing songs as a teenager.⁹⁷ In 1865, he delivered a speech to the Grand Lodge condemning the government for tolerating nationalist music.⁹⁸ At his processions defying the Act, bands played ‘Boyne Water’, ‘The Protestant Boys’ and ‘Kick the Pope’.⁹⁹ Whilst incarcerated, like nationalist prisoners, he entertained himself and produced propaganda by writing songs. These explicitly invoked parading tradition (he titled one ‘Dolly’s Brae’) as well as Protestantism and seventeenth-century conflicts (‘Protestantism and No Surrender’).

⁹² MOHA, *Report of the Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland* (henceforth RPGOL), 5th Jun. 1867.

⁹³ MOHA, RPGOL, 15th May 1861; NLI, ‘A New Song on the Procession to lay the foundation stone of the O’Connell Monument’, MS 5,169(56e) was produced for the procession. Its lyrics include ‘the great O’Connell who fought John Bull with all his might’.

⁹⁴ *Newsletter*, 13th Jul. 1859.

⁹⁵ *Examiner*, 16th Jul. 1863.

⁹⁶ *Freeman’s*, 9th Mar. 1861.

⁹⁷ McClelland, *Johnston*, pp. 12-14.

⁹⁸ MOHA, William Johnston of Ballykilbeg.

⁹⁹ PRONI, WJD, 12th Jul. 1867, D880/2/19; *Examiner*, 15th Jul. 1867; *Nation*, 20th Jul. 1867.

‘Let Recreant Rulers Pause’ associated his cause with Protestant history through the tune of ‘The Protestant Boys’:

Rouse! Orangemen, rouse! In God be your hope,
 For England is now allied with the Pope:
 And Babylon falling she seeks to restore-
 To wave her red banner above us once more.
 But, by the Boyne’s ferry,
 And the dear walls of Derry,
 Where our fathers of old fought for truth and God’s cause,
 Ere they shall have bound us,
 And terror’s toil wound round us,
 We’ll stand and recover our Protestant laws.

He thus externalised the English from traditions of Protestant liberty. Johnston reinforces his allegations of England’s allegiance to the Pope when he states that while ‘Papists are plotting’, prisons are ‘filled with the loyal and true’.¹⁰⁰ On his release in May 1868, he told a crowd that listening to ‘The Protestant Boys’ on the Twelfth convinced him of their right to celebrate ‘liberty’s birthday’.¹⁰¹ In Parliament, he complained that the government did not apply the Act when nationalists played ‘party tunes’.¹⁰² After Parliament repealed the Bill, the Order resumed full-scale celebrations at the first opportunity. The *Dundalk Democrat* described how in 1872 those in procession ‘drummed away till the ears of men and beasts ached’.¹⁰³ Johnston sustained his political career until his death in 1902. His profile demonstrates that legislation appearing to restrict unionist music could augment that music as much as it did nationalist equivalents.

¹⁰⁰ PRONI, D880/7/4B.

¹⁰¹ *Dundalk*, 2nd May 1868.

¹⁰² *Hansard*, HC, 16th Mar. 1869, Vol. 194, CC. 1547-1549.

¹⁰³ *Dundalk*, 20th Jul. 1872.

Orange processions formed the mainstay of unionist musical culture, but were largely confined to Ulster. Twelfth commemorations further south employed similar music (e.g. ‘Boyne Water’ in Dublin in 1848), but performances were indoor and less provocative.¹⁰⁴ Attempting to tempt the university into the nationalist fold, the nationalist *Freeman’s Journal* often highlighted that ‘Memory of the Dead’ was written in Trinity College, but Trinity’s musical practices were otherwise unionist.¹⁰⁵ Nationalists and unionists had different conceptions of what constituted national occasions. Unlike nationalists, who played their own anthems on would-be national occasions, Trinity followed British practice and played the British national anthem, for instance when the Lord Lieutenant visited in 1885.¹⁰⁶ During the College Tercentenary celebrations in 1892, Trinity’s status and its relationship to Catholic educational institutions was subject to a bitter debate.¹⁰⁷ The musical rituals of the celebrations reflected the College’s insecurity and its desire to ingratiate itself to the British government.¹⁰⁸ Bands played the ‘Marseillaise’ to welcome guests from France, and ‘Auld Lang Syne’ those from Scotland. The status quo, this music implied, guaranteed Trinity’s position in an international Republic of Letters. A British Army band performed, the church service included ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’, and attendees sang ‘God Save the Queen’ to conclude the celebratory dinner.¹⁰⁹ The College also commissioned a ‘Tercentenary Ode’, written by George Savage Armstrong, Professor of English literature, and composed by Robert Prescott Stewart, Professor of Music. Its highly anticipated performance included no pipes or other markedly Irish

¹⁰⁴ *Newsletter*, 14th Jul. 1848.

¹⁰⁵ *Freeman’s*, 1st Sept. 1898; *Freeman’s*, 5th Mar. 1910.

¹⁰⁶ *Newsletter*, 22nd Oct. 1885.

¹⁰⁷ S. Pašeta, ‘Trinity College, Dublin, and the Education of Irish Catholics, 1873-1908’, *Studia Hibernica* 30 (1998/1999), pp. 15-18.

¹⁰⁸ T. Irish, *Trinity in War and Revolution 1912-1923* (Dublin, 2015), p. xvi.

¹⁰⁹ *Records of the Tercentenary Festival of the University of Dublin Held 5th to 8th July, 1892* (Dublin, 1894), pp. 79-80, 94, 157.

instrumentation. ‘The poem’, stated the official record, ‘traces the history of learning in Ireland from its legendary dawn, through the early Christian period inaugurated by St Patrick... and the Norman and succeeding eras, on to the present day’. Presenting the Norman Conquest as part of the positive progress of Ireland contradicted nationalist narratives that glorified a Gaelic past. The Ode’s message was explicit. Referencing Britain, it describes how Ireland ‘beneath her wide imperial destiny might prosper’. Musical quotations from ‘God Save the Queen’ and ‘Rule Britannia’ follow, while those who sang ‘of Erin’s wrong’ (nationalists) are ‘the menace with us still’. Here, a tempo change from *allegro* (quick) to *moderato* (moderately) underlines the regretful tone.¹¹⁰ Trinity, therefore, justified its unionism both historically and intellectually. Despite nationalist attempts to suggest otherwise via ‘Memory of the Dead’, the Tercentenary Ode articulated that Trinity remained a predominantly unionist university.

Like Home Rule MPs who employed radical music, unionist politicians appealing to a widening franchise used music to evoke a glorious Protestant past and give their cause a populist gloss. Unionist MPs had engaged with Orange music previously, notably John Pitt Kennedy MP who wrote songs, but William Johnston’s campaign broke new ground. The repeal of the Party Processions Act saw others follow. After a Conservative MP addressed the Twelfth in Armagh in 1876, crowds sang ‘The Protestant Boys’ and ‘Kick the Pope’.¹¹¹ When Conservatives and later the UUP campaigned against Home Rule, they aligned their parliamentary efforts with the heroic Protestant histories espoused in Orange song. As in nationalism, election victories were obvious opportunities for unionist performances. In Antrim in 1895, the Conservative Flute

¹¹⁰ *Records*, pp. 5, 51, 99; TCDA, ‘Tercentenary Ode’, MUNSOC CHORAL/3/7.

¹¹¹ *The Times*, 15th Jul. 1876.

Band celebrated election victory by playing ‘loyal airs’ and the national anthem outside the Orange hall.¹¹² When the Unionist candidate achieved victory in Enniskillen in 1910, supporters carried him through the town while a band played ‘the old stereotyped Orange airs’.¹¹³ Performances supporting Carson synthesised the various strands of unionist music most widely. At his rallies during 1912, bands performed the Orange ‘Dolly’s Brae’, the patriotic ‘God Save the King’ and the Protestant ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’.¹¹⁴ In seeming to associate themselves with unionist musical traditions, politicians asserted their legitimate claim to the ideologies that music expressed. Musical culture’s social function helped to involve grassroots unionists. Communal singing at meetings facilitated communal expression of ideology. The St Anne’s Women’s Unionist Association concluded each meeting by singing the national anthem.¹¹⁵ Bands, singers and dancers attracted patrons to social events to hear speeches and raise funds. In 1913, the Ballycastle Women’s Unionist Association expected a soiree with patriotic ‘song selections’ to break even at worst.¹¹⁶

The prospect of a new Home Rule Bill after 1910 intensified musical cultures opposing nationalism. Home Rule campaigners associated themselves with ideals of rebellion through radical songs, but unionist music drew the same associations. New songs specifically opposing Home Rule included ‘For Union and King’, which pledges to oppose ‘rebel’ and ‘traitor’ and which attendees sang at a demonstration against Home Rule in 1911:¹¹⁷

¹¹² *Newsletter*, 1st Aug. 1895.

¹¹³ *Fermanagh*, 29th Jan. 1910.

¹¹⁴ *Evening*, 20th Sept. 1912; *Freeman’s*, 10th Apr. 1912.

¹¹⁵ PRONI, ‘General Committee Minute Book’, D2688/2/1.

¹¹⁶ PRONI, ‘Ballycastle Women’s Unionist Association’, D2688/5/1.

¹¹⁷ PRONI, ‘Programmes of Unionist Demonstration at Rotunda Rink’, D989/A/11/1.

Brothers shall we never?
 Never! Never! Never!
 But we'll cling for ever to union to king!
 No Home Rules shall bind us
 But traitors ever find us,
 With thousands more be-hind us,
 For union and for King!

The dynamics start at *forte* (loud) and never fall beneath *mezzoforte* (moderately loud), underlining unionist opposition to Home Rule, the work of 'traitors'. A *crescendo*, starting on 'with thousands more' concludes on 'King', itself a minim, double the length of the crotchets that end the song's other lines. Thus, the statement of loyalty is loud, long and, connoted by the C Major chord accompanying it, pure.¹¹⁸ As 'For Union and for King' illustrates, both nationalists and unionists associated Home Rule with rebellion. Nationalists did so to give their constitutional cause a patriotic appeal, unionists to suggest Home Rule was merely the latest manifestation of nationalist treachery. An Apprentice Boys songbook produced in 1913 similarly drew on a history of Protestant defiance against nationalist traitors. Its introduction stated that Derry was 'once more at the throes of a great and decisive battle'. One of its songs, 'The Orangeman', refers to the Siege of Derry, concluding 'Their war cry "No Surrender"/Is echoed now again/By bands of their descendants/Undaunted Orangemen'.¹¹⁹ The Siege was therefore a precedent that legitimised, inspired and guaranteed Home Rule's defeat. These narratives of Protestant resistance entrenched a collective identity structured around opposition to rebellion and loyalty to the monarchy and the union.

¹¹⁸ PRONI, 'Official Programme "Demonstration of Unionists of Leinster, Munster and Connaght – Dublin, with sheet music "For Union and for King"', D989/C/4/1.

¹¹⁹ *Evening*, 18th Jun. 1913.

On Ulster Day, unionists used musical performances to demonstrate a united front and convey (or perhaps exaggerate) the scale of opposition to Home Rule. Unionist Women's Associations arranged concerts in the weeks preceding, at which MPs spoke against Home Rule, and arranged bands and music on the day.¹²⁰ On Ulster Day itself, Orange bands played 'Boyne Water', 'Kick the Pope', 'Rule Britannia' and the national anthem in procession, associating their efforts with the Boyne, anti-Catholicism and British patriotism.¹²¹ These performances also externalised the government from British patriotic music in the way that it was presented and received. Lillian Spender was a unionist activist and UVF supporter (with whom she volunteered as a nurse). In February 1914, she described a packed concert ending with the national anthem: '[N]ot a soul left their seats till it was over, but stayed and sang with all their hearts. That is more than you will see at an ordinary English concert ever'.¹²² Ulster's patriotism outstripped that of its unreliable English allies. Unionists not only imitated British musical patriotism, but surpassed it. Both nationalists and unionists criticised Britain. However, where nationalists presented an alternative national tradition, unionists presented a superior version of Britain's national tradition.

The UVF and nationalist paramilitaries used music in similar ways. Music provided entertainment for members; Lillian Spender performed at a 'sing-song' for UVF members in March 1914.¹²³ Like nationalists, the UVF adopted British army musical rituals in order to appear to be a legitimate military force. After a UVF display at Balmoral in June 1914, the *Belfast Weekly News* reported that the 'corps marched like a

¹²⁰ D. Urquhart and M. Luddy (eds.), *The Minutes of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council and Executive Committee, 1911-40* (Dublin, 2001), p. 24.

¹²¹ *Freeman's*, 30th Sept. 1912; PRONI, 'Ulster Day 1912', D2846/1/2/6/1.

¹²² PRONI, 'Personal Diary of Lillian Spender (henceforth PDLS)', 20th Feb. 1914, D1633/2/19.

¹²³ PRONI, PDLS, 25th Mar. 1914, D1633/2/19.

crack battalion of infantry’ to the ‘inspiring strains of a military tune played by their own band’.¹²⁴ Spender, who attended, wrote:

No one who wasn’t there can realise the feeling it gave one to see those thousands of men, with their heads bared, while the prayers were offered up; to join in “O God Our Help in Ages Past”; and to see them marching past, old men and boys, rich men and poor men, side by side, all cheerfully willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause they hold so dear. I longed to be marching with them.¹²⁵

The march clearly impressed sympathetic spectators. Even the *Freeman’s Journal*, opposing and belittling unionist efforts, acknowledged their intention. It described the UVF, marching with music and bands, as ‘playing at soldiers’.¹²⁶ That the unionist message was obvious to their political opponents demonstrates that they used a similar musical language. Moreover, like nationalist counterparts, the involvement of Spender and women’s unionist associations indicates that musical culture provided accessible involvement for unionist women, but this should not be exaggerated. Women were not, as Spender observes, part of the march. Nationalist and unionist musical culture was predominantly male. However, unlike the nationalists, hymns located the unionists within a Protestant tradition. Sir John Ross, later Lord Chancellor of Ireland, wrote that UVF members singing ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’ resembled ‘Cromwell’s troopers singing a psalm’ before the Battle of Marston Moor at which their ‘religious zeal and fanaticism proved too strong for the splendid chivalry of the Royal Army’.¹²⁷ The UVF asserted its British patriotism by playing the national anthem during inspections by

¹²⁴ PRONI, D2023/11/1.

¹²⁵ PRONI, PDLs, 15th Apr. 1914, D1633/2/19.

¹²⁶ *Freeman’s*, 6th Oct. 1913.

¹²⁷ Marston Moor: Civil War Battle in 1644 in which Parliamentarians defeated the largely Catholic Royalists. J. Ross, *The Years of My Pilgrimage* (London, 1924), p. 237.

Carson in September 1913.¹²⁸ The UVF's performances also associated it with Orange parades. Spender, describing a UVF band marching with a drum observed: 'No one beats a big drum in quite the same way as an Orangeman'.¹²⁹

The common cultural ground of nationalism and unionism was evidenced further upon the outbreak of the First World War. Like the Redmondite National Volunteers, unionists used their musical culture to support army recruitment. In isolated examples, unionist and constitutional nationalist bands played together at recruitment rallies, but mostly unionists restricted themselves to specifically unionist events.¹³⁰ Lillian Spender sang for new recruits as she had for the UVF, including 'It's a long, long way to Tipperary' and the British patriotic song 'Land of Hope and Glory'.¹³¹ Performances became more downplayed as the War developed, although they maintained renditions of the national anthem at fundraising concerts and dances for wounded soldiers.¹³² In 1915, the number of bands at the Twelfth was restricted.¹³³ The Relief of Derry commemoration similarly proceeded 'without the usual display of bands'.¹³⁴ In 1916, the Twelfth was cancelled altogether because of the War and the Easter Rising.¹³⁵ Parades continued to be low-key until December 1918 when the Apprentice Boys staged a full-scale celebration of the anniversary of the Shutting of the Gates in Derry.¹³⁶ For some at the front, music provided a link to home and an opportunity for entertainment. Guy Owen Lawrence Young, of the Royal Irish Rifles, described a Siege

¹²⁸ PRONI, 'My Visit to Antrim in Connection with Anti-Home Rule Campaign', D2846/1/2/7.

¹²⁹ PRONI, PDLS, 4th Aug. 1914, D1633/2/19.

¹³⁰ *Independent*, 6th Nov. 1914.

¹³¹ PRONI, PDLS, 5th Oct. 1914, D1633/2/19.

¹³² *Newsletter*, 2nd Apr. 1915; *Newsletter*, 9th Apr. 1917; *Newsletter*, 21st Apr. 1917.

¹³³ *Newsletter*, 15th Apr. 1915.

¹³⁴ *Independent*, 14th Aug. 1915.

¹³⁵ PRONI, 'Letter from Edward Bradshaw to James Davidson regarding the cancellation of the 1916 Twelfth parade', D3815/A/298.

¹³⁶ *Newsletter*, 13th Aug. 1918; *Newsletter*, 6th Dec. 1918.

of Derry Commemoration in December 1915: 'The procession headed by torchlights and the band marched through the village playing No Surrender, Derry Walls and the Boyne Water'.¹³⁷

Young's account highlights the affection that many unionists attached to their musical culture. Unionist music asserted more overtly religious ideals than nationalist equivalents, and portrayed Britain as unreliable rather than oppressive. Like nationalist counterparts, unionists employed music that claimed political space, intimidated opponents, and synthesised ideologies that were not necessarily linked. For politicians, music embraced populist opinion, associating them with Protestant history and British imperialism. Like the IRA, the UVF used the British military's musical rituals to create an air of legitimacy. Perhaps ironically, the shared cultural heritage of nationalism and unionism was British, rather than Gaelic. Nationalists who appealed to the shared Gaelic or Republican heritage of Catholic and Protestant Irishmen underestimated the extent to which nationalism's radical rhetoric and Catholic connections were reflected in unionist musical cultures that portrayed nationalists as violent traitors and Papal dupes. Unionist music blurred the competing interests of radical politics, loyalism to Britain, and religion, but it also highlighted how far many considered those ideals incompatible with a nationalist Ireland.

¹³⁷ PRONI, 'MS Account of a Journey to France and of army life there by Guy Owen Lawrence Young', D3045/6/11.

II

Inventing Northern Ireland: Unionist Musical Culture, 1921-1972

After 1921, the six north-eastern counties that would have been exempt from Home Rule ('Northern Ireland') remained part of the UK. In the Free State, pockets of unionist politics survived, notably in Trinity College and the counties bordering Northern Ireland where Protestants were most numerous and where the Orange Order remained prominent; there were 40 Orange lodges in Monaghan in 1964. The main beneficiary was J. J. Cole.¹³⁸ Cole, Orange Order county Grand Master, former unionist MP, and subsequently an independent member of the Dáil (1923-1944), campaigned on issues appealing deliberately to Protestants, including opposition to the compulsory teaching of Irish.¹³⁹ Protestants made up the majority of Northern Ireland's population, and dominated its devolved government. That government (initially led by James Craig) defined Northern Ireland as 'exclusively unionist'.¹⁴⁰ Where the Free State government was reluctant to commemorate Armistice Day, the Northern Irish government held services annually. It invited Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Ireland and Jewish representatives, but none from the Catholic Church, to lay wreaths alongside politicians and the Orange Order.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, as Eric Kaufmann demonstrates, to call Northern Ireland an 'Orange State' assumes a level of consensus between Orange institutions and government that did not exist. The Order often criticised the government, while others of Orange, unionist and Protestant ideology criticised both the government and Grand

¹³⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy*, p. 57.

¹³⁹ *Independent*, 15th Aug. 1929.

¹⁴⁰ Mulholland, *Northern*, p. 54.

¹⁴¹ PRONI, 'Armistice Day', LA/7/3/A/9; PRONI, 'Armistice Day and Cenotaph', LA/7/3/A/16; D. Fitzpatrick, 'Commemoration in the Irish Free State' in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 184-203.

Lodge.¹⁴² This was particularly true during crisis periods after sectarian violence in Belfast in 1935, and after Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister in 1963. O'Neill pursued political reform, believing that Catholic and Protestant moderates could create a more harmonious Northern Ireland. He joined the Orange Order, but only for the sake of his political career, and the Order criticised his conciliatory gestures.¹⁴³ Moreover, the radical Evangelical pastor Ian Paisley attacked the Orange Order, the UUP and existing Protestant churches. In 1951, he founded his own Church, the Free Presbyterians, motivated by his opposition to ecumenism.¹⁴⁴ Paisley left the Orange Order over its failure to oppose ecumenism and joined the Independent Orange Order (by now a small, evangelical organisation).¹⁴⁵

As became clear with the civil rights movement and the violence that followed, Catholics were never reconciled to the devolved Northern Irish State. Northern Ireland was a new political unit, which had existed in the unionist imagination for only a short time, and in reality for an even shorter time. The border was not fixed until 1925, and even then it was always a 'contested' boundary, both politically and in its practical application.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, nationalists on both sides of that border were vocal in their desire to unite the island. Multiple historians, notably Marc Mulholland, have demonstrated that these aspirations, combined with the unionist movement's potential to divide, encouraged the Northern Irish government's belief that a united unionist front 'had to be maintained in the face of all other issues that might tend to fragment the

¹⁴² Kaufmann, *Orange*, p. 15.

¹⁴³ D. Bryan, *Orange Parades: The Politics of Ritual, Tradition and Control* (London, 2000), pp. 81-82.

¹⁴⁴ S. Bruce, *God Save Ulster: The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 22-31, 71, 197-198.

¹⁴⁵ Bryan, *Orange*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁶ P. Leary, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border, 1922-1972* (Oxford, 2016), p. 96.

alliance'.¹⁴⁷ Mulholland and Anthony Hepburn both highlight that, fearful of incursions from socialists and Protestant evangelicals, successive governments were unwilling and unable to address Catholic grievances over discrimination.¹⁴⁸ Paul Bew illustrates, regarding O'Neill, that any apparent compromises with nationalists risked emboldening hard-line unionist opposition.¹⁴⁹ To maintain the appearance of a confident, united movement, despite the reality, the 'symbolic apparatus of the state' was unequivocally unionist.¹⁵⁰ Historians have explored these efforts in the new university established in Coleraine (instead of Catholic-dominated Derry), in the naming of 'Craigavon' (a new town in Armagh), and in the architecture of Stormont (in Craig's words, its grandeur was an 'ocular demonstration that Ulster is ready and capable to maintain her own government, and to exist independently of Dublin').¹⁵¹ These symbolic assertions, alongside failed attempts to address perceived discrimination, meant that there was little about Northern Ireland that appealed to Catholics. Any 'mild attempts to ameliorate discrimination' or 'weak' symbolic gestures did little to reverse that situation, and only 'riled a section of ultra-Protestant opinion'.¹⁵² By analysing two crisis points in unionist history – the 1935 Belfast riots and the period between O'Neill becoming Prime Minister and the fall of Stormont in 1972 – this section argues that unionist musical culture after 1921 encapsulated the Northern Irish government's determination (and eventual inability) to maintain the unionist alliance. In doing so, it provides a valuable new prism through which to understand why Catholics were not successfully reconciled to the Northern Irish State. Musical culture provides a fruitful means of tracing unionist

¹⁴⁷ Mulholland, *Northern*, p. 31.

¹⁴⁸ A. Hepburn, *The Conflict of Nationality in Modern Ireland* (London, 1980), p. 165; Mulholland, *Northern*, p. 45.

¹⁴⁹ P. Bew, 'The Civil Rights Movement and the Collapse of the Unionist State', *Revue Francaise de Civilisation Britanique*, 5 (2) (1989), p. 51.

¹⁵⁰ Mulholland, *Northern*, p. 54.

¹⁵¹ Mulholland, *Northern*, pp. 31, 54; Hepburn, *Conflict*, p. 179; J. Loughlin, *The Ulster Question since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 111.

¹⁵² Mulholland, *Northern*, p. 53.

divisions. Comparing those divisions to nationalism, where various groups claimed the legitimate right to represent the rebel song tradition, highlights that in both cases music did not necessarily cultivate more inclusive political cultures, but rather reinforced and reconceptualised uncompromising music.

Nationalist and unionist musical cultures dealt with the same cultural changes and political contexts (the border question, protests, violence). However, while the musical language was often similar, the messages differed. Unionist music was disseminated in three primary contexts. Parades and rallies were already staples of unionist soundscapes. They were focal points of political disputes, both with nationalists and rival unionists, and often precipitated violence, bringing participants into conflict with government. With a Unionist-run devolved government, there was no possibility for a William Johnston figure to vilify traitorous Westminster politicians, who now had no power over parades. The Northern Irish government banned more nationalist than unionist processions. Nevertheless, that it banned unionist parades at all exposed cracks in the uneasy unionist alliance.¹⁵³ To this was added two new contexts: broadcasting and State ceremony. The former presented unionists (like cultural nationalists) with opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the secular and commercial culture depicted by broadcasters troubled socially conservative Protestants. On the other, the BBC promoted the Orange Order with equal if not greater sympathy than it did traditional music. Having previously resisted unionist pressure, Northern Ireland's perceived loyalty during the Second World War convinced the BBC to broadcast the Twelfth on

¹⁵³ Miller, *Queen's Rebels*, p. 139; Bryan, *Orange*, p. 69.

radio from the 1940s and television from 1958.¹⁵⁴ In its own words, the BBC gave the Twelfth a ‘big showing’.¹⁵⁵

Genuine State ceremony was relatively new to both nationalist and unionist musical culture. In contrast to the Free State’s indecision in designating a national anthem, the Northern Irish government showed fewer doubts defining its allegiances through music. This reflected its insecurity. Unionists anxious to assert their national allegiance and their separation from the Free State reached immediately for the most readily available musical rituals, namely those by which the unionist movement defined itself throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They did not select a separate anthem for Northern Ireland. A Welsh anthem emerged from the nineteenth-century cultural revival, while Scotland selected its own for sporting events in the 1950s.¹⁵⁶ Both countries distinguished themselves from England. The Northern Irish government was distinguishing itself from the Free State, and thus preferred the undiluted British symbolism of ‘God Save the King’. The same preference characterised the opening of the Northern Irish Parliament in June 1921 by King George V. The organiser W. B. Spender (civil servant, UVF quartermaster general and army officer) invited army bands. The programme included ‘God Save the King’ (three times) and ‘Pomp and Circumstance’, associated with royal coronations.¹⁵⁷ Spender asked the Director of State musicians to assemble an orchestra consisting exclusively of ‘Ulster Loyalists’, by which he meant to exclude Catholics and nationalists.¹⁵⁸ Armistice Day services at the

¹⁵⁴ Hajkowski, *BBC*, p. 222; Bryan, *Orange*, pp. 164-165.

¹⁵⁵ BBCWAC, NI3/726/1.

¹⁵⁶ Morgan, ‘From Death to a View’, p. 79; ‘Games Team Picks New Scots Anthem’, *BBC News* (9th Jan. 2010) accessed at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/8449939.stm> on 19th Jun. 2017.

¹⁵⁷ PRONI, ‘Official Programme at the State Opening of the First Parliament of Northern Ireland’, D1415/D/4.

¹⁵⁸ PRONI, ‘Arrangements for the State Opening of Parliament 22 June 1921’, CAB/6/67; PRONI, D1415/A/11.

cenotaph outside Belfast City Hall were similarly unequivocal. After the wreath laying ceremony, the band of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, an Irish regiment of the British army, played the reveille and the ‘Londonderry Air’. A choir then sang ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’ and the national anthem. The ceremony thus combined army ritual (the reveille) with an Irish but not nationalist character (‘Londonderry Air’), Protestantism (‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’), monarchism, and British patriotism (the national anthem). The programme printed the lyrics to ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’, suggesting that those gathered were expected to participate in the performance.¹⁵⁹ Northern Ireland’s would-be statesmen therefore used music and communal performance to express loyalty to King, Empire and faith. Northern Irish Armistice Day services were not unusual – ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’ also featured at equivalent English services – but the large Catholic population made them more problematic, and contrasted with downplayed Armistice Day commemorations in the Free State.¹⁶⁰ Nationalist music offered little to Protestants, and the music of Northern Irish State ceremony offered little to Catholics.

The Free State included rebel songs in much of its ceremony, but Northern Irish governments did not include Orange songs on official occasions. That in itself reflects the difficulty that Unionist politicians faced balancing their assertions of self-determination against their desire for respectability. Ultimately, Orange music was still part of the Northern Irish State’s character, even if not in State ceremony. In 1922 the *Irish Independent* described the police reservists, the ‘B’ Specials, ‘marching through Omagh... [singing] “Dolly’s Brae” and other Orange songs’ after arresting eleven

¹⁵⁹ PRONI LA/7/3/A/9; PRONI LA/7/3/A/16.

¹⁶⁰ R. Cowgill, ‘Canonizing Remembrance: Music for Armistice Day at the BBC, 1922-7’, *First World War Studies* 2 (1) (2011), pp. 77, 97.

men.¹⁶¹ In turbulent circumstances after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, this triumphalism from the notorious reservists is unsurprising. Politicians also engaged with Orange Order and Apprentice Boys musical rituals in electoral politics (like rebel songs in independent Ireland, they had populist value). The well-attended parades and social events were opportunities for politicians to capitalise on the available publicity, energise their core support, and align themselves with Protestant history. Two Unionist MPs attended Twelfth celebrations in Derry in 1925 and joined in the singing of the national anthem.¹⁶² In November 1922, James Craig attended a fundraising dance in aid of ‘dependants of loyalists killed or injured during recent disturbances’. It included the foxtrot and waltz, and a jazz band. Unlike cultural nationalists and priests in the Free State, unionists did not demonstrate the same concern about imported dances. The programme concluded with the national anthem. Craig thus positioned himself as a patriot, aiding victims of nationalist violence.¹⁶³ The frequency with which unionists used such events for fundraising indicates their popularity. Both Ballycastle and North Down branches of the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council (UWUC) organised fundraising concerts and dances throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In Ballycastle, attendees asserted their patriotic loyalty by singing the national anthem.¹⁶⁴

Like the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland, unionists in the Free State used music to assert a separate identity. Where nationalists sang the ‘Soldier’s Song’, unionists sang the British national anthem at events like the Dublin Horse Show.¹⁶⁵ In 1929, Trinity College defended its practice of playing ‘God Save the King’ on formal occasions. The

¹⁶¹ *Independent*, 7th Jan. 1922.

¹⁶² *Press*, 13th Jul. 1933.

¹⁶³ PRONI, ‘The Loyalist Relief Fund Bazaar at Stormont Castle’, D1415/E/25.

¹⁶⁴ PRONI, ‘Association Minute Book’, D2688/3/1; PRONI, D2688/5/1.

¹⁶⁵ NAI, TSCH/3/S367A.

King was still Ireland's Head of State, but the 'Soldier's Song' was by then the national anthem. That conflict manifested in teams withdrawing from Trinity's sporting events in protest against the continued use of 'God Save the King'.¹⁶⁶ On Armistice Day, throughout the 1920s, Trinity and UCD students sang the respective national anthems with which they identified before violent confrontations.¹⁶⁷ Unionist musical culture in the Free State survived most clearly in the border counties. J. J. Cole and his supporters used music to assert their British identity. Cole was openly enthusiastic about the British monarch's position as Head of State, unlike the main Irish parties. At Twelfth celebrations in Cavan in 1929, Cole insisted 'we shall not readily mute our lip when the band strikes up "God Save the King"'. The crowd then sang the anthem, asserting their allegiance.¹⁶⁸ Bands at the Twelfth created a spectacle that inspired confidence in unionist endurance. In 1930, reflecting on the size of the procession (which included fifty lodges with bands), Cole asserted that the Order 'was never so strong as it is at present'.¹⁶⁹ These performances defied the border. Just as Hibernian bands crossed the border for demonstrations, Free State Orange lodges participated in Northern Irish parades. Bands from six Monaghan lodges marched in August 1931 to mark the relief of the Siege of Derry. 'Thank God' said the Grand Master of Tyrone welcoming them, 'they had free Ulster to come to'.¹⁷⁰ Bands from the Free State still participated as late as 1963, but the frequency of their participation and their prominence in the Free State declined after Cole lost his seat in the Dáil.¹⁷¹ Moreover, these demonstrations were

¹⁶⁶ E. Morris, "'God Save the King" versus "The Soldier's Song": The 1929 Trinity College National Anthem Dispute and the Politics of the Irish Free State', *Irish Historical Studies* 31 (121) (May 1998), pp. 72-90; *Independent*, 19th Jan. 1929.

¹⁶⁷ *Irish, Trinity*, p. 256.

¹⁶⁸ *Anglo-Celt*, 20th Jul. 1929.

¹⁶⁹ *Anglo-Celt*, 19th Jul. 1930.

¹⁷⁰ *Independent*, 13th Aug. 1931.

¹⁷¹ BBCWAC, 'Orange Celebrations 1963-1968', NI3/726/4.

never as provocative as nationalist equivalents in Northern Ireland. Indeed, after bands played the ‘Ulster Hymn’ and ‘God Save the King’ at the opening of an Orange hall in Knockbride in 1931, the Chair made a speech calling for good relations with Catholics.¹⁷² The comparison illustrates why nationalist musical cultures came to articulate a challenge to the existence of Northern Ireland in a way that unionist musical culture in the Free State did not. Free State Protestants were a smaller minority than Northern Irish Catholics, and did not face similar levels of apparent discrimination. Nor did they realistically hope to return Ireland to the UK as nationalists hoped to end partition. Without the impetus of a political agenda, their musical performances declined.

Nationalist rhetoric on partition (both sides of the border) meant that Northern Ireland’s status appeared to be an open question. The scale of parades and their accompanying music was a straightforward means by which the most outspoken unionists asserted the British link and their Protestantism. The Orange Order’s increasingly ritualised Twelfth demonstrations included the national anthem and hymns, including ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’.¹⁷³ By using hymns, marching organisations conflated their opposition to a unified Ireland with their religion.¹⁷⁴ In 1931, in memory of Apprentice Boys members who died on the Western Front, bands commemorating the Siege of Derry played ‘The Supreme Sacrifice’, composed to honour soldiers killed during the First World War. The band then led the march around the city walls, linking the commemorated soldiers to those who defended Derry in 1688.¹⁷⁵ Marching organisations played Orange songs

¹⁷² *Meath*, 29th Jan. 1931.

¹⁷³ *Newsletter*, 4th Jul. 1927; *Newsletter*, 9th Jul. 1928.

¹⁷⁴ PRONI, ‘Apprentice Boys of Derry: General Committee’, PM/5/113/1.

¹⁷⁵ *Independent*, 13th Aug. 1931.

like ‘The Protestant Boys’ and printed them in their songbooks, albeit less frequently than during the more turbulent Home Rule crisis.¹⁷⁶ Hymns and the national anthem were the most common song choices.¹⁷⁷ This reflected a desire for respectability, but did not dilute their political obstinacy. At an Apprentice Boys demonstration ‘with bands from all parts of Northern Ireland’ in April 1935, H. Millford MP stated that he ‘hoped the day would never come when their national anthem would be substituted by “A Soldier’s Song”’.¹⁷⁸

Occasionally, music appeared to facilitate Catholic and Protestant reconciliation. In October 1934, the *Irish Press* reported that ‘nationalist and unionist bands marched together through the streets playing the same tunes and parading for the same object’ preceding a Derry carnival.¹⁷⁹ These isolated examples should not suggest that musical culture was less antagonistic. High unemployment, housing shortages, and consequently a rise in sectarian tensions in 1930s Northern Ireland saw Unionists come under pressure from left-wing political parties and from explicitly anti-Catholic Evangelicals like the Ulster Protestant League.¹⁸⁰ The latter engaged with similar musical cultures as the UUP, but primarily in order to criticise the Unionist government. In November 1934, when government minister Basil Brooke addressed an Ulster Protestant League meeting, attendees sang ‘Kick the Pope’ and ‘God Save the King’ and alleged that the ‘weak-kneed’ government was allowing employers to give Catholics preferential treatment.¹⁸¹ The concerns expressed by others within the Orange Order itself illustrate

¹⁷⁶ G. Ramsey, ‘Band Practice: Class, Taste and Identity in Ulster Loyalist Bands’, *Ethnomusicology Ireland*, 1 (2011), p. 8; *Orange Standard*, p. 20.

¹⁷⁷ *Independent*, 28th Oct. 1929; *Press*, 25th Oct. 1935.

¹⁷⁸ *Independent*, 23rd Apr. 1935.

¹⁷⁹ *Press*, 5th Oct. 1934.

¹⁸⁰ A. Hepburn, ‘The Belfast Riots of 1935’, *Social History*, 15 (1) (1990), pp. 76-77.

¹⁸¹ *Independent*, 16th Nov. 1934.

that amidst these tensions some considered nationalist music a threat. Bangor District Lodge discussed a nationalist band in February 1935:

Bro. Patrick Bryans brought under the notice of the District Lodge the fact that a R.C. accordion band parades the streets of Bangor playing the Soldier's Song, the Boys of Wexford and such Rebel tunes without let or hindrance, such conduct if persisted would lead to a breach of the peace yet the authorities did not make any attempt to prevent them. He further stated that this band had in the early part of the day headed a procession of children to the abbey park under the oversight of the followers of the late Joseph Devlin M.P. and the conduct of the children while in Bangor was anything but commendable as they stole from shops and broke and destroyed property in the Borough and did considerable damage otherwise. The band was over the title of the Joseph Devlin Memorial Accordion Band and it was stated that the band was the cause of a disturbance in the city of Belfast some time ago.¹⁸²

Nothing here suggests that the band, whose music the Orangemen associated with stereotypical Catholic criminality, was encouraging reconciliation. These various antagonising factors combined to fuel increasing unrest ahead of the 1935 unionist marching season, including a shooting in Belfast's lower docks area. Home Affairs Minister Richard Dawson Bates banned all processions in the area, but lifted the ban within a few days after the Orange Order held parades anyway. The Twelfth saw scuffles between Orangemen, their bands, and local Catholics, as well as another shooting. Weeks of major riots in the lower docks followed, including the violent expulsion of Catholics from their homes.¹⁸³

That the 1935 violence was associated with parades meant that musical culture became a point of contention between hardliners and more conciliatory unionists, including those in government. In isolated cases police arrested individuals because of their

¹⁸² PRONI, 'Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18', D4367/4/1/4.

¹⁸³ Hepburn, 'Belfast', pp. 79-80, 87.

provocative uses of music. A Belfast woman was fined for riotous behaviour on 22 July after she sang ‘The Sash My Father Wore’ on the Catholic-dominated Academy Street (located in the lower docks).¹⁸⁴ In October, members of a Belfast band were fined for ‘threatening and insulting behaviour’ after singing ‘Dolly’s Brae’ while passing the Catholic Winetavern Street.¹⁸⁵ The following month, Arthur McGonigal was prosecuted for singing ‘The Sash My Father Wore’ outside a Catholic church.¹⁸⁶ The Orange Order also subsequently sought to curb its members’ enthusiasm, assigning marshals at parades and asking bands to ‘stop playing, drumming, or other music in the vicinity of places where special notices to that effect are displayed’.¹⁸⁷ The Apprentice Boys took similar measures.¹⁸⁸ Eric Kaufmann and Dominic Bryan characterise these disputes as disagreements between the rank-and-file and Orange/Unionist leaders, but this underestimates the extent to which grassroots members also sought to moderate their more unruly comrades.¹⁸⁹ In December 1935, Whiterock Lodge recorded:

Bro. Jordan stated [that] he was appointed marshal for 12th July and that when the procession was proceeding home via North Street he had to ask the W.M. of a certain lodge to refrain the members of his lodge from singing party tunes. The members acceded to Bro. Jordan’s request and stopped immediately. When Bro. McCall Dist. Secretary was told of the incident he told Bro. Jordan that he had no right in stopping them from singing he also told him to mind his own business and let them sing as much as they liked. Bro. Jordan now wanted to know [if] he as a marshal did anything to be insulted in such a manner.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁴ *Press*, 22nd Jul. 1935.

¹⁸⁵ *Press*, 25th Oct. 1935.

¹⁸⁶ *Press*, 22nd Jul. 1935; *Press*, 15th Aug. 1939; PRONI, HA/32/1/621.

¹⁸⁷ BBCWAC, NI3/726/1.

¹⁸⁸ PRONI, ‘Ephemera Relating to the Apprentice Boys of Derry’, D4446/B/1/18.

¹⁸⁹ Kaufmann, *Orange*, p. 23; Bryan, *Orange*, p. 95.

¹⁹⁰ PRONI, D4367/3/2.

Provocative Orange music's respectability was therefore questioned not just by the Grand Lodge and government, but also by ordinary members. 'Party tunes' remained popular, but there was no consensus regarding the conduct of parades. Established parties in independent Ireland used rebel songs, but not those of dissident Republicans. Similarly, the 1935 riots created the potential for conflict at all levels of unionism between those concerned about Orange musical culture's controversial reputation and those not prepared to sacrifice its political value. Most importantly, Orangemen could not classify the government's attempts to ban parades and the arrests of individuals for provocative singing as the work of traitorous British governments. These were clearly decisions taken by their fellow unionists.

The emergence of 'The Sash My Father Wore' reflects the divisions that appeared after 1935. The song's authorship and origins are unclear. It resembles 'Irish Molly, O!', an eighteenth-century ballad, but does not appear in reports of Orange parades until the 1935 riots.¹⁹¹ Its lyrics appeal to ancestral heritage, rather than loyalty to parties or institutions. This and the timing of its emergence suggest that it resonated in the context of threats to parading culture posed both by nationalists and Unionist ministers.

It is old but it is beautiful,
 Its colours they are fine –
 It was wore at Derry, Aughrim,
 Enniskillen and the Boyne.
 My father wore it when a youth,
 In by gone days of yore,
 And it is on the Twelfth I love to wear,
 The sash my father wore.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ *Evening*, 20th Jul. 1935; BB, 'Irish Molly, O!' Harding B11 (1787).

¹⁹² *The Twelfth* (Belfast, 1970).

In this, the most widespread version, the sash Orangemen wear on parade symbolises Orange determination to recreate Protestantism's historical victories. Other versions were more explicitly anti-Catholic. One, printed in Glasgow (further evidence of transnational Ulster-Scots connections), labels the sash a 'terror to them papish boys'. Common to all versions is the simple marching rhythm, without changes in tempo or dynamics, making the song ideal for parades.¹⁹³ It quickly became the Order's defining tune, reflected in the fact that the BBC used it as the title tune for its Twelfth coverage.¹⁹⁴ The song's growth is emblematic of the narrow path the Northern Irish government was trying to tread between restraining and mobilising its supporters. Its attempts to moderate unionist musical culture's excesses risked antagonising its most passionate advocates.

Even as lodge membership was falling, the number of parades was rising, exacerbating these disputes.¹⁹⁵ Hiring bands placed lodges under financial strain. In Killyleagh, the Orange lodge paid its band £2 for the Twelfth in 1926, funded by dances, concerts, and a charge on members marching on the Twelfth.¹⁹⁶ The band gave the lodge prestige. When it failed to attend an event in 1949, the lodge recorded that 'it did not look so good as far as the lodge was concerned and also the public for support'.¹⁹⁷ The spectacle reflected the lodge's strength and justified the expense. The efforts of Whiterock Lodge are illustrative. In 1927, its £12 band budget was inadequate, and instead it shared a band with another lodge.¹⁹⁸ This continued until 1934 when it raised enough to hire its

¹⁹³ *Orange Standard*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁹⁴ BBCWAC, NI3/726/1.

¹⁹⁵ Kaufmann, *Orange*, p. 282.

¹⁹⁶ PRONI, 'Minute Book of Killyleagh True Blues', D4367/1/4.

¹⁹⁷ PRONI, 'Minute Book of Killyleagh True Blues', D4367/1/6.

¹⁹⁸ PRONI, 'Minute Book of Whiterock Temperance LOL 974', D4367/3/1.

own.¹⁹⁹ In addition to Twelfth marches, the lodge planned its own parades, part of a trend that became known as the ‘mini-twelfth’.²⁰⁰ High demand on the Twelfth meant that band fees increased rapidly and in 1939 Whiterock spent more than 90 per cent of its funds hiring one.²⁰¹ There were no Twelfth celebrations between 1940 and 1944 due to the War.²⁰² The result was an unprecedented financial boon for lodges. Without parades, they held dances and indoor concerts, and spent less on marching bands.²⁰³ Whiterock Lodge had more money ahead of the Twelfth in 1945 than at any earlier time.²⁰⁴ Thereafter, the annual cost gradually eroded its reserves, and in 1959 it was unable to afford a band.²⁰⁵ Eventually, it formed its own and charged other lodges for using it.²⁰⁶ The significance of increasing costs was that it led lodges to pursue cheaper, less professional alternatives to fife and drum bands or lambegs, with important consequences during the 1960s. Lambegs did not disappear entirely.²⁰⁷ A BBC reporter in 1963 estimated that fifty bands and ‘scores of lambeg drums’ participated in the Twelfth in Armagh.²⁰⁸ While they were less common at parades, lambegs featured instead at ‘drumming matches’. ‘Here,’ novelist Sam Hanna Bell wrote in 1956, ‘it is not unison between the drummers but rivalry. Each is endeavouring to throw the other into confusion with missed claps, faster and more intimate rolling, or just an overwhelming volume of sound’.²⁰⁹ This competition culture demonstrates further similarities to nationalism. When particular forms of musical culture – dancing

¹⁹⁹ PRONI, D4367/3/1; PRONI, ‘Minute Book of Whiterock Temperance LOL 974’, D4367/3/2.

²⁰⁰ PRONI, D4367/3/2; Bryan, *Orange*, p. 72.

²⁰¹ PRONI, D4367/3/2.

²⁰² PRONI, Minute book of Killyleagh True Blues, D4367/1/5; PRONI, D4367/3/2.

²⁰³ PRONI, D4367/3/2.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ PRONI, ‘Minute Book of Whiterock Temperance LOL 974’, D4367/3/3.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Bryan, *Orange*, p. 70.

²⁰⁸ BBCWAC, NI3/726/4.

²⁰⁹ S. Hanna Bell, *Erin’s Orange Lily* (London, 1956), pp. 14-16.

hornpipes, piping, or drumming matches – are promoted in a competitive environment, the rivalry adds new levels of interest for participants.

The confrontations of 1935, the defiant Orange response, and the increasing number of parades combined to perpetuate and accentuate unionist musical culture's provocative qualities. Orange music was insistently masculine. The Order did not permit women 'to walk in procession at any demonstration', although after 1955 it made an exception for 'instrumentalists in bands'. This reflected a shortage of musicians rather than changing attitudes; parades remained male-dominated.²¹⁰ Most women participating in Twelfth parades were spectators.²¹¹ Most importantly, unionist music maintained its relationship with space, territoriality and violence, including confrontations with nationalists. In Willowfield in 1937, Orange bands and lambege drummers asserted control over the immediate space 'directly opposite the new Catholic Church'.²¹² Similarly, after IRA internee Thomas Williams was hanged in 1942 'ugly scenes developed' when Protestant women sang 'The Sash my Father Wore' and 'other Orange tunes' outside the prison.²¹³ Such performances also surfaced at sporting events. During a football match between Linfield FC, whose fans were largely Protestant, and Derry City, largely Catholic, Linfield supporters sang Orange songs while Derry supporters responded with nationalist songs.²¹⁴ In each of these circumstances, unionists and nationalists confronted one another's spaces or contested spaces (Church, prison, sporting arena) and, through music, asserted their autonomy over it, even if transiently.

²¹⁰ BBCWAC, NI3/726/1.

²¹¹ *Examiner*, 19th Apr. 1960.

²¹² *Strabane*, 15th May 1937.

²¹³ *Limerick*, 2nd Sept. 1942.

²¹⁴ *Independent*, 8th Feb. 1955.

Unionist politicians, seemingly seeking to repair their tainted relationship with marching organisations, publicly blamed nationalists for the 1935 riots.²¹⁵ They also positioned themselves firmly behind unionist musical cultures and against nationalist equivalents (it is unlikely to be coincidental that Dawson Bates attempted to ban the ‘Soldier’s Song’ later that year). At an Apprentice Boys rally in 1948, sixteen bands played ‘party tunes’ before the Prime Minister, Basil Brooke, gave a speech attacking British MPs for criticising perceived discrimination in Northern Ireland. The songs located Brooke’s remarks within a history of Ulster defiance.²¹⁶ In the context of the difficult relationship between Unionist politicians and unionist musical cultures after 1935, their indulgence of unionist music bore striking resemblance to the uses of Republican music by establishment politicians in independent Ireland. By employing populist music, politicians associated themselves with historical precedents whose commitment to unionism was in less doubt than their own. Thus, in their efforts to stop the movement fracturing, unionists encouraged defiant political cultures. Music epitomised and expressed that defiance. In its ability to ascribe and transform the allegiance of political spaces, and in its association with parades, music encapsulated the confrontational symbolism that made Northern Ireland unattractive to Catholics.

Terence O’Neill’s attempts to create a unionist culture that could appeal to Catholics during the 1960s encountered similar difficulties. His ‘Civic Weeks’ consisted of public fairs aiming to promote better community relations.²¹⁷ They included music, some of which had no political connotations, notably dances and concerts. However, they also

²¹⁵ Hepburn, ‘Belfast’, p. 93.

²¹⁶ *Press*, 30th Mar. 1948; *Independent*, 30th Mar. 1948; *Ulster*, 3rd Apr. 1948.

²¹⁷ Mulholland, *Crossroads*, pp. 34, 132.

included military bands on parade playing the national anthem.²¹⁸ In this they did not differ from civic weeks in Britain, but in Northern Ireland to do so was more symbolically controversial.²¹⁹ Civic weeks purportedly promised an inclusive unionism, but these bands gave them a more traditional unionist quality, epitomising their apparent failure to achieve meaningful improvements in community relations. That civil rights protesters called for ‘civil rights, not civic weeks’ is revealing of that failure.²²⁰ Nor did politicians and State bodies abandon their association with Orange music. O’Neill continued to appear at Twelfth celebrations.²²¹ Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the BBC covered the Twelfth. In 1957, producer Diana Hyde stated that she wanted BBC coverage to ‘avoid offending either side’. However, while the programme was not explicitly anti-Catholic its music was unavoidably Orange, opening with ‘The Sash my Father Wore’.²²² Most listeners (nationalist and unionist) simply did not tune in. BBC research suggested that a modest 4 per cent of Northern Irish audiences heard the broadcasts.²²³ Nonetheless, there was certainly a tension between O’Neill’s conciliatory gestures and this continued indulgence of Orange music on the part of Unionists and State bodies.

As it had after 1935, the Unionist government’s apparent willingness to compromise exposed it to unionist suspicion. Ian Paisley especially responded negatively to O’Neill’s reformist stance, as well as to Protestant denominations that seemed to embrace ecumenism. After the government flew the Belfast City Hall’s Union flag at

²¹⁸ PRONI, ‘Ulster Weeks’, CAB/9/F/123/132.

²¹⁹ *The Times*, 11th Oct. 1929.

²²⁰ Mulholland, *Crossroads*, p. 133.

²²¹ BBCWAC, NI3/726/4.

²²² BBCWAC, NI3/726/1.

²²³ BBCWAC, ‘Orange Celebrations File 2 1960’, NI3/726/2.

half-mast to mark the Pope's death in 1963, Paisley led a protest during which the crowd sang 'God Save the Queen' and 'Onwards, Christian Soldiers'.²²⁴ He also used musical examples to conflate Catholicism and Republicanism. An editorial in Paisley's newspaper, the *Protestant Telegraph*, in July 1966, explained: "'The Soldier's Song' is sung in the town hall. So it continues and the pulpits are silent as the drift continues to idolatry and popery'.²²⁵ Paisley therefore merged the 'Soldier's Song' and ecumenism. Meanwhile, the 'pulpits' (Anglicans, Presbyterians, politicians) failed to oppose it. Like the different nationalist organisations, mainstream unionists and Paisleyites used music to compete with each other over political space. When Paisleyites protested at an O'Neill speech in 1966, O'Neill's supporters re-established control of the auditory space by singing 'God Save the Queen' and 'God Save the Prime Minister'.²²⁶ Moderate nationalists who used uncompromising nationalist music romanticised it and, to a degree, legitimised those who interpreted such music more rigidly. Likewise, the consistent willingness of Unionist politicians to indulge the political and religious preconceptions of their voters through music encouraged more enthusiastic proponents like Paisley. When hardliners believed that O'Neill was compromising with nationalists, they could draw on a ready-made set of musical symbols.

Between State ceremony, O'Neill, and the UUP's uneasy relationship with Orange Order musical culture, mainstream unionism was too conciliatory for many Protestants, notably Ian Paisley, but too exclusive for most Catholics. The civil rights movement confronted unionist music directly. As noted in Chapter Four, protests were deliberately timed to coincide with the Twelfth and Apprentice Boys marches. Protesters mockingly

²²⁴ *Independent*, 15th Jul. 1963; *Press*, 15th Jul. 1963.

²²⁵ *Protestant Telegraph* (henceforth *Protestant*), Jul. 1966.

²²⁶ *Press*, 31st Mar. 1966.

sang ‘The Sash My Father Wore’ at unionist counterdemonstrators, and many sang the ‘Soldier’s Song’ to express their alternative national allegiance. Parades became sites of conflict that the Northern Irish government was ill-equipped to handle. The UUP’s use of music had epitomised its attempts to keep the uneasy the unionist alliance together. Put under new strain in the late-1960s, that alliance splintered. Paisleyite politics expanded, including the formation of a formal party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), while former UUP MP William Craig founded the Vanguard Party and argued for an entirely independent Northern Ireland. The DUP and, fleetingly, Vanguard, contested the UUP’s claim to unionist, Protestant and Orange musical traditions. These groups, and others within the UUP itself, isolated O’Neill, who resigned in May 1969. A patchwork of unionist paramilitary groups, including the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), added another dimension to this contest. Underlining the musical cultures of all these groups was an anxiety about unionism’s future in the face of what appeared to be a new nationalist threat.

The Troubles created more common cultural experiences between unionist and Republican paramilitaries than it did any other political actors. That is reflected in the new songs largely written by unionist paramilitaries inspired by the conflict. Republicans attempted to prove that Protestants and Catholics had a united history of seeking independence by citing Protestant nationalists (e.g. Wolfe Tone). In contrast, unionists referred to nationalist rebellion to emphasise unionism’s history of resisting it. ‘The Flag We Love’ asks listeners if they have ‘lost the courage/Of the glorious days of yore’ in language reminiscent of ‘Memory of the Dead’:

Shall we listen to the treason
Of sedition nurtured knaves

And condemn our loyal kindred
 To the fate of wretched slaves?
 Our fathers travelled forward
 Shall we go tamely back
 Shall we look on while men design
 To shoot us in the back?

Previous generations resisted traitors, and the current cohort are expected to do likewise.²²⁷ Paramilitary authors often used pseudonyms or remained anonymous and usually did not print songs with music, but they did use existing tunes to invoke their unionist heritage. ‘We Are Proud of Our Wee Ulster’ uses the tune of ‘Derry’s Walls’. It replaces ‘No Surrender, onward march,/For Derry’s maiden walls’ with ‘Kick them all down the south/For Ulster we are proud’.²²⁸ Just as ‘Men Behind the Wire’ quotes older nationalist songs to establish a radical lineage, twentieth-century unionists align themselves with Derry’s seventeenth-century defenders. Catholics now besiege the whole of Ulster, not only Derry, and the Northern Irish border replaces the city walls as the barrier with which Protestants repel them.

By appropriating nationalist songs unionists demonstrated that both traditions employed a common musical language, but they also asserted their authority over nationalism. ‘Come all ye Young Protestants’ used the tune of ‘The Patriot Game’. Unlike Behan’s complex and ambiguous original, the unionist version unequivocally asserts the virtue of its cause:

Come all ye young Protestants and list while I sing,
 For the love of old Ulster is a wonderful thing,
 We’ll fight to defend it with tooth and with nail,
 We will make certain that truth will prevail.
 Around 1690 at a place called the Boyne,

²²⁷ *Twelfth* (1971), p. 27.

²²⁸ *Orange Loyalist Songs* (Belfast, 1972).

Our forefathers gathered with William to join.
 God's blessing was on them as they entered the fray,
 It's due to these heroes we're free men today.²²⁹

Behan portrayed a naïve, teenage O'Hanlon. In contrast, the men of the Boyne described here find defending Ulster 'wonderful', rather than 'terrible', implying that listeners might imitate their defence of Ulster. Unionists similarly co-opted civil rights songs. Paisleyites sang 'Paisley is our leader, we shall not be moved', for example, at demonstrations.²³⁰ Using existing tunes was partly practical as well as political, making songs easier to learn. The use of popular music ('Chase Them Home' used the tune of 'Take Me Home Country Roads') illustrates that function most clearly.²³¹ Popular music, while harnessed more effectively by nationalists, provided nationalists and unionists with a common reference point.

Unionists undermined nationalists in comic songs. 'The "L" Plate Jelly Bombers' mocks the tendency for IRA bombers to accidentally blow themselves up as a 'new craze'.²³² It depicts the bombers as clumsy learners, now dead, to the narrator's glee.

'We Are the Billy Boys' is more threatening:

We are, we are, we are the Billy Boys.
 We are, we are, you know us by our noise,
 We are up to our necks in Fenian blood.
 Surrender or you die.
 We are the good old Billy Boys.²³³

²²⁹ *Loyalist Songs* (1971).

²³⁰ *Independent*, 29th Jan. 1969.

²³¹ *UDA Detainee Songbook* (Long Kesh, 1974).

²³² *Loyalist Songs* (1972).

²³³ QUBA, STE Days 19-22, MS 33/2/5.

Although ‘Fenian’ ostensibly referred to nationalist rebels, it regularly denoted all Catholics and nationalists.²³⁴ More than a vague instruction to emulate the Boyne, this song specifically threatens listening nationalists with violence. Britain, furthermore, was an unreliable, potentially traitorous ally. ‘The Reason Why’ criticises British governments as ‘breakers up of Ulster’ and ‘traitors to the Queen’.²³⁵ The unionists assert their numerical strength (‘three hundred thousand Orangemen’) and demand an explanation for the actions of lesser Britons in Parliament. Songs often recycled the refrain of Orangemen demanding to ‘know the reason why’. Another version, for instance, attacks government for imprisoning loyalist paramilitaries.²³⁶

Like nationalist songs praising the masculine men who fought for Ireland (e.g. ‘Men Behind the Wire’), unionist paramilitaries praised their own manly heroes, for example ‘UDA Upon my Chest’:

UDA upon my chest,
For we are men of Ulster’s best,
10,000 men will fight today,
And all are men of the UDA.

Trained in combat, hand to hand,
They can fight like any man,
Trained to fight and proud to die,
To keep a clean blue Ulster sky.

They combine pride in their affiliation with bravery (‘proud to die’) and masculinity (‘men’, ‘man’) before placing their heroes in historical context:

Rebels came in 69,

²³⁴ The Ulstermen depicted in F. McGuinness, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (London, 1986) use the term throughout as a synonym for Catholic.

²³⁵ *Shankill* (c. 1972).

²³⁶ *The Orange Cross Book of Songs, Poems and Verse* (Belfast, 1972).

The UDA fell into line,
Pushed the Taigs back up the Falls,
Then started singing Derry's Walls.²³⁷

Conflating rebels, civil rights protesters, and Catholics (using the derogatory slang 'Taigs') this final stanza romanticises its subjects, who emulate the 1688 Derry garrison by repelling Catholic invaders from unionist territory. It uses the tune of 'Green Beret', an American military ballad, carrying the militarism and legitimacy of an official army. Like nationalists, unionist paramilitaries romanticised their martyrs. 'The Ballad of Tommy Herron' describes a leading UDA member's death as 'the biggest [death] since Carson'.²³⁸ The British Army's reception in song was less consistent. 'The Battle of Bradshaw's Bay', printed in the UVF's *Combat* newspaper, condemns the army's failure to cooperate with the UVF.²³⁹ In contrast, Vanguard's *United Ulsterman* printed a song in 1973 entitled 'The IncomPARABLE Paras', congratulating the parachute regiment (of Bloody Sunday infamy) for leaving the IRA 'shaking in their boots'.²⁴⁰ The common denominator in these songs is their appeal to a history of unionist and Protestant loyalty through established cultural references (the Boyne, the Siege of Derry, masculine fighters). The splintering of unionism did not lead to the growth of substantially different musical traditions. Instead, it entrenched pre-existing attitudes and traditions. Unionism's musical language stifled anything that was ideologically compromising.

The same entrenchment is reflected in the emergence of 'Blood and Thunder' bands at Orange parades. As noted, the increasing cost of bands (Whiterock lodge paid £70 for a

²³⁷ *UDA Detainee*.

²³⁸ *Ibid*.

²³⁹ *Combat*, c. Aug. 1977.

²⁴⁰ *United Ulsterman*, Jun. 1973.

band in 1970), deterred lodges from hiring professionals.²⁴¹ Instead, lodges turned to cheaper, amateur Blood and Thunder bands, largely consisting of teenage male flautists. Orange historian Billy Kennedy described them as ‘noisy, arrogant and untuneful’, but acknowledged their unique ‘drumming, fluting, and toe-in style’.²⁴² Being amateurs, their musicianship was lacking; music was often written alphabetically rather than in staff notation.²⁴³ Moreover, they were independent from lodges and not necessarily Order members, making them difficult to control.²⁴⁴ For these young men (bands were overwhelmingly male), often followed by women of the same age, boisterous behaviour was sexually advantageous.²⁴⁵ Official Orange and Apprentice Boys services continued to be characterised by hymns such as ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’, and Blood and Thunder bands employed traditional Orange songs such as ‘The Sash’ and ‘Derry’s Walls’, but they also played more provocative material.²⁴⁶ At the Scarman Tribunal, Bernadette Devlin described bands singing ‘We Are the Billy Boys’, and a resident of Belfast’s (Catholic) Unity Flats recalled bands performing ‘Keep the Fenian Down’ and other ‘obscene songs about the religion of the people within the flats’.²⁴⁷ Some Blood and Thunder bands also advertised in paramilitary newspapers and played paramilitary songs on parade.²⁴⁸ Violence inspired new nationalist music supporting new, contemporary radicals, but using well-established devices and historical reference points. Likewise, ill-disciplined bands, Northern Ireland’s uncertain future, unrest, and

²⁴¹ PRONI, ‘Minute Book of Whiterock Temperance LOL 974’, D4367/3/4; Montgomery and Whitten, *Parade*, p. 15.

²⁴² *The 12th Celebrations: The Queen’s Silver Jubilee* (Belfast, 1977).

²⁴³ D. Bell, *Acts of Union: Youth Culture and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 131-134.

²⁴⁴ *The Orange Order Today* (Navan, 1995), p. 5.

²⁴⁵ Bell, *Acts*, p. 102; G. Barr and E. McClure (eds.), *The Twelfth: What It Means to Me* (Belfast, 1997), pp. 16-22.

²⁴⁶ *The Twelfth* (Belfast, 1969); QUBA, STE Days 11-14, MS 33/2/3.

²⁴⁷ QUBA, MS 33/2/5; QUBA, STE Days 38-41, MS 33/2/10.

²⁴⁸ Bell, *Acts*, pp. 131-134; Montgomery and Whitten, *Parade*, p. 15; *Combat*, Aug. 1975.

the divided unionist movement encouraged hostile unionist musical cultures anchored in familiar traditions.

Aggressive bands and the unprecedented challenge to unionist parades accentuated contestations over territory and space, contributing to hostility between nationalists and unionists. In 1970, Nationalist MP Patrick McGill claimed ‘playing of the tunes’ on the threshold of any ‘disputed’ space between Catholic and Protestant territory created a ‘flashpoint’.²⁴⁹ Music travelled further and faster than those marching, augmenting their control over the surrounding space. A march only inhabited a street. Music penetrated walls. Their songs conveyed political messages. William John Largey, of Unity Flats, described being woken by bands playing ‘The Sash’ and ‘Derry’s Walls’.²⁵⁰ In other circumstances, provocative performances could, as RUC Inspector Robert McGimpsey stated, ‘incite the people’ and inspire violence.²⁵¹ A police or army presence did little to diffuse these situations. In Portadown in 1972, ‘armed troops were on duty in the predominantly Catholic area but, despite their presence, Orangemen persisted in dancing and playing “The Sash” in front of Catholic homes’.²⁵² This intensified debates within the Order about maintaining respectability. At the Scarman Tribunal, Rev. Martin Smyth, later head of the organisation, denied that bands played sectarian songs.²⁵³ Most did not follow his implausible denial, however, and in subsequent years the Order took more drastic steps, including the implementation of band contracts.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ *Northern Ireland Senate Parliamentary Debates, 7th July 1970: Inquiry by Scarman Tribunal – Adjournment: Demonstrations by Orange Order on Twelfth of July, Arms Search by Troops in Lower Falls*, Vol. 54 (28) (Belfast, 1970).

²⁵⁰ QUBA, MS 33/2/5; QUBA, MS 33/2/10.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Independent*, 14th Jul. 1972.

²⁵³ QUBA MS 33/2/10.

²⁵⁴ Montgomery and Whitten, *Parade*, pp. 15, 30.

Although unionist musical culture was provocative, it was also a politically valuable tradition with a loyal following. Just as different nationalist parties fought over nationalist music, unionist groups fought over their musical culture. The UUP had formal links with the Orange Order, giving them perhaps the most direct claim to its musical traditions. However, more often Orange music was used against the UUP, exemplifying the deteriorating relationship between the party and its Orange Order supporters. In 1970, during a no confidence vote in Unionist leader James Chichester-Clark, crowds supporting his removal sang ‘Orange songs’.²⁵⁵ Vanguard made its own claim to unionist music. In 1972, crowds at a Vanguard rally in Belfast sang ‘The Sash’ before Craig’s speech.²⁵⁶ Vanguard also produced its own songs, although without particular success (they do not appear to have been either sung or reproduced). The ‘Ulster Vanguard Anthem’ uses the tune of a hymn, ‘What a Friend We Have in Jesus’, and encourages Protestants to ‘stand together’, concluding ““No Surrender!” Men of Ulster’.²⁵⁷ The hymn brings religious connotations, and the phrase ‘No Surrender’ invokes the Siege of Derry, forming the familiar combination of faith and history. Different factions used songs to attack their opponents’ right to use unionist traditions, not unlike the different nationalist parties. ‘Our Leader’ praises Craig as Carson’s heir, unlike O’Neill’s reformists who are ‘traitors in our government’.²⁵⁸ Bands and lambeeg drummers also played at rallies held by Paisley and the DUP.²⁵⁹ Crowds sang the national anthem, hymns (‘The Lord’s My Shepherd’), and Orange songs (‘The Sash’), particularly when celebrating election victories.²⁶⁰ Paisley used ‘God Save the Queen’

²⁵⁵ *Press*, 14th Aug. 1970.

²⁵⁶ *Independent*, 28th Mar. 1972.

²⁵⁷ *United Ulsterman*, Nov. 1972.

²⁵⁸ *Loyalist Songs* (1972).

²⁵⁹ *Press*, 2nd Jul. 1970.

²⁶⁰ QUBA MS 33/2/10; *Press*, 16th Feb. 1972; *Independent*, 20th Jun. 1970.

as a token of defiance against nationalism, while the ‘Soldier’s Song’ symbolised treachery. In March 1968, Paisley’s *Protestant Telegraph* condemned Republicans for singing the latter at their events.²⁶¹ For Paisley, the alleged refusal of Catholics to sing ‘God Save the Queen’ illustrated their ingratitude. He told the Scarman Tribunal:

[I]n this country we find the position that even in Roman Catholic schools... where schools are built partly by money from the government... the National Anthem is never sung. In England it is entirely different; Roman Catholics would stand and join in the singing of “God Save the Queen”.²⁶²

Paisley demonstrated an absolutist interpretation of national identity that rejected the legitimacy of Republicanism. The anthem symbolised the nation and all were obliged to acknowledge their national allegiance. As these examples suggest, unionist musical culture was contested and widely reappropriated for new circumstances. Consistently, the splinters of unionism pursued the least compromising musical cultures.

To an extent, Paisleyite musical culture mirrored the conservatism of cultural nationalists, however religion was more central for Paisley than was Catholic morality for traditional music and dance. Rejecting mainstream commercial musical culture, Paisley’s Church did not hold discos or dances (Paisley called them the ‘Pope’s indulgences’). They did not intend, he explained, to provide inane pastimes for the masses (it was not their policy ‘to entertain the goats’).²⁶³ In 1974, the Free Presbyterian Church protested against a production of ‘Jesus Christ Superstar’, accusing it of blasphemy. Rev. Alan Cairns ‘criticised in particular a song sung in the production by

²⁶¹ *Protestant*, Mar. 1968.

²⁶² QUBA, STE, Days 165-168, MS 33/2/42.

²⁶³ Bruce, *God Save Ulster*, p. 167; S. Bruce, *Paisley: Religion and Politics in Northern Ireland* (Oxford, 2009), p. 142.

Mary Magdalene, entitled “I Don’t Know How to Love Him”’. He said ‘if anyone listened carefully to the words of the song, it was clear that Mary Magdalene was a whore and Jesus had been one of her men’.²⁶⁴ Paisley led similar protests with hymn singing against joint Catholic-Protestant acts of worship and other ecumenical gestures.²⁶⁵ These fundamentalist values did not mean that Paisley and his Church opposed modernity outright. Like cultural nationalists, they objected to aspects of modern culture, notably blasphemy and sexualisation (not unlike anti-jazz campaigners). However, they did not exclude modern genres. Indeed, the Free Presbyterians drew upon similarly spiritual genres to civil rights protesters by using ‘gospel hymns’.²⁶⁶ Unionists had consistently used music to conflate unionism and Protestantism. Unionism’s potential to fracture manifested in uncompromising unionist musical cultures. Likewise, Protestant divisions encouraged Paisley’s protests against ecumenism and sexually unrestrained commercial music. In both instances, it illustrates the tensions in the movement that inhibited its appeal to Catholics. As Paisley’s religious convictions and his statements regarding nationalist music suggest, he had little interest in appealing to them at all.

Although unionist and Republican paramilitaries both engaged with musical culture, Republican songs achieved more international recognition. Unionist paramilitary newspapers and publications like *Shankill (UDA) News* printed songs regularly, but for a small audience.²⁶⁷ The UVF’s *Orange Loyalist Songs* attacked Republicans and British politicians, describing its contents as ‘an expression of the Ulster Protestant will

²⁶⁴ *Independent*, 11th Jun. 1974.

²⁶⁵ *Fermanagh*, 30th Jan. 1971; *Independent*, 26th Jun. 1968.

²⁶⁶ Bruce, *Paisley*, pp. 142, 156; PRONI. ‘Free Presbyterian Church in Ulster’, HA/32/2/11.

²⁶⁷ *Shankill*, c. 1972.

to resist not only our traditional enemies but also attempts of an English government at Westminster to coerce our people and nation into an alien state – the Irish Republic'.²⁶⁸ In common with and often alongside Republicans, unionist paramilitaries were imprisoned. In the process, they developed similar tactics for propaganda and entertainment as Republicans. Loyalist prisoners wrote several songs quoted above in 'the cold, grey loneliness of a prison cell', circumventing the prison restrictions and communicating their ideology to outsiders.²⁶⁹ Mirroring *An Phoblacht*, *Combat* sought to create sympathy for prisoners by printing poems and songs by their spouses.²⁷⁰ Long Kesh prisoners wrote the *UDA Detainee Songbook*. Its content was triumphant and violent. One song mocking nationalists used the tune of 'Seasons in the Sun':

We have bombs, we have guns,
We have Fenians on the run,
And the ones that we killed,
Were all b_____s every one.²⁷¹

The farcically upbeat tune gives the violent lyrics a callous humour. Unlike Republicanism, unionism was more difficult to align with international anti-establishment politics. These songs make no effort to do so and such compositions made no inroads into popular music (there were no chart-topping unionist equivalents to The Wolfe Tones), but they demonstrate the almost indiscriminate hatred between paramilitary unionists and Republicans (similar to songs describing Orangemen taking home their dead). Certainly, it illustrates the extent to which violence polarised some in Northern Ireland. Music did not create violence, but it reinforced the attitudes that did. For imprisoned unionists, like Republican equivalents, music's most important role was

²⁶⁸ *Loyalist Songs* (1972).

²⁶⁹ *Orange Cross*, p. 1; *Loyalist Songs* (1972), p. 10.

²⁷⁰ *Combat*, Jun. 1974.

²⁷¹ *UDA*.

as entertainment. William Smith was incarcerated in Long Kesh between 1972 and 1977 where, he wrote, unionist prisoners often heard IRA prisoners celebrate IRA attacks by singing Republican songs.²⁷² The unionists convinced prison officers to give them an FM radio and record player, which boosted morale more effectively than leader Gusty Spence's decision to sound the Reveille every morning.²⁷³ While their propaganda efforts had limited success, music was an important means of relief and communication with the outside world for unionist prisoners.

Unionist musical culture during the early years of the Troubles reflects the unionist anxiety about Northern Ireland's future that had prevailed since partition. Nationalists made unification their overarching objective. In doing so, they called for Gaelic and Republican unity, but unionist music demonstrates that many Protestants saw no place for their culture in a united Ireland. The common Gaelic, Republican or working-class cultures spoken of in nationalist political rhetoric were not the common cultures underlying nationalist and unionist musical output. Instead, nationalist claims over Northern Ireland encouraged those governing the newly created territory to pursue uncompromising musical cultures in State ceremony and, especially, electoral politics. These choices epitomised a political situation in which Northern Ireland alienated Catholics to a greater extent than independent Ireland alienated Protestants. Any attempts to reconcile Catholics to Northern Ireland inevitably created tensions with hardliners in the uneasy unionist alliance. Those hardliners had an easily accessible set of musical symbols and rituals with which they could confront those tensions. In 1935 and again in the late-1960s, the Unionist government found itself unable to address

²⁷² W. Smith, *Inside Man: Loyalists of Long Kesh – the Untold Story* (Newtownards, 2014), pp. 31-32, 166.

²⁷³ *Ibid.* pp. 42, 67.

Catholic grievances or curb the excesses of its own supporters. This analysis of unionist music, therefore, supports the view that unionism's potential to fracture inhibited the development of more accommodating political cultures. Moreover, as demonstrated by the music indulged in by the various unionist groups that had emerged by 1972, when unionism did fracture the symbols over which different groups competed were the least conciliatory.

Conclusion

The Spirit of whose Nation?

Rebel songs, stated SDLP leader Gerry Fitt in 1979, glorified ‘men of violence’. ‘I would be very careful’ he explained, ‘about how nationalist songs have been used to exploit the feelings of young people’ and ‘give them a chip on the shoulder’.¹ This thesis has examined the validity of generalisations like Fitt’s, and asked in what ways musical culture affected Irish politics. After the 1994 ceasefire, unionist parades moved to the foreground of Northern Irish politics, notably an annual Orange parade in Drumcree which passed along the mainly Catholic Garvagh Road in Portadown.² In 1995, Catholic residents disputed the right of the marchers to use the road and, mimicking civil rights protesters, staged a sit-down protest to block the parade. The Orangemen responded by setting up tents. Eventually, residents allowed them through, but disputes continued in subsequent years.³ What is striking about Drumcree is that those negotiating went into intricate detail over music. In 1995, the Order proposed that only the band and not the large entourage be allowed through. When police blocked the march, the band approached police lines and played ‘The Sash’. Catholic residents, meanwhile, opened their windows and played rebel songs.⁴ Music thus extended beyond these thresholds between Catholic and Protestant space and competed for control of the contested space beyond. In 1995 the Orangemen offered to limit the number of bands and only play ‘hymns or suitable march music’ and nothing at all when passing the Catholic Church. Residents rejected this proposal.⁵ In 1997, the Order reasserted that it

¹ *Sunday*, 25th Nov. 1979.

² C. Ryder and V. Kearney, *Drumcree: The Orange Order’s Last Stand* (London, 2002), p. xvi.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 103-123, 155-181, 219.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 78-84.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 108, 115.

was prepared to restrict the number of bands, remain silent when passing the church and limit themselves to hymns ‘common to both traditions’.⁶ Unlike Fitt’s generalisations, these negotiations offer an instructively specific valuation of music. As a bargaining chip, music was important enough that the Order was reluctant to sacrifice the musical element of the parade, but less important than the physical presence of its members in the contested territory (as it was for the residents).

While stressing musical culture’s importance in nationalist politics, this thesis has also sought to qualify that importance, as in the example of Drumcree. Many existing histories assume that the claims made for a musical culture by its strongest advocates are accurate. Republicans who believed that music inspired rebels to take up arms against Britain were speaking either with propagandist intent or retrospective nostalgia. Nationalist claims to have resisted oppressive British jails through musical performance, similarly, are not supported by their statements and experiences at the time. This work has highlighted instances throughout nationalist history, including the Fenians, the revolutionary generation, Eamonn Boyce, and the Troubles, where political prisoners (nationalist and unionist), cultivated musical cultures in prison that undoubtedly improved morale, but were ultimately limited by the nature of imprisonment. Similarly, existing histories that take acts of apparent oppression by British and Irish governments in isolation, such as the arrest of Jack O’Sheehan in 1918 or the 1935 Dance Halls Bill, distort their significance. Even so, as examples like ‘Men Behind the Wire’ suggest, censorship was rarely an effective method of suppressing musical culture.

⁶ *Correspondence about Parades by the Orange Order in Portadown, Garvaghy Road Resident’s Coalition, Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and the Lower Ormeau Road Concerned Citizens* (Belfast, 1997).

The evidence presented here also problematises the periodisation and categorisation of music in Ireland. Constitutional and radical nationalists alike were prepared, with strikingly few exceptions, to glorify violence in song, even if they were selective about which acts of violence were legitimate subjects. The Irish Parliamentary Party's use of Fenian songs was vital to its presentation of constitutional politics as rebellion by other means. Fianna Fáil politicians did not romanticise the Provisional IRA, but the anti-Treaty rebels of the Civil War were an integral part of their self-image as the 'Legion of the Rearguard'. Likewise, UUP politicians who glorified the men of the Boyne did not represent an Orange State, but rather a fragile unionist alliance. Music demonstrated their apparent commitment to unionism, but at the expense of any meaningful appeal to Catholics. Rebel songs did not disappear with the sale of the first Pete Seeger record in Belfast, nor did they return unchanged with the gunmen in 1972. The pretensions of cultural organisations like Comhaltas to non-sectarianism, based on the absence of explicit Catholicism from their ideology and a smattering of Protestant members, should also not mask their politicisation. Nor should their presumed traditional values suggest that they preserved an unaltered, ancient Irish culture. Moreover, the suggestion that nationalist music inhibits the development of more artistic musical cultures does not stand up when contrasted with the level of interaction between cultural nationalism and the most prominent Irish composers and choreographers.

Instead, by taking a long-term, historical approach to political musical culture, this thesis demonstrates more complex narratives in Irish political history. By taking an ethnomusicological focus on context, performance, and social function, it stresses music's importance as a participatory exercise in which nationalists and unionists constructed communal identities, became involved in political movements, and exposed

themselves to radical ideas. The Fenians, the Irish Parliamentary Party, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish Volunteers, the IRA, the Blueshirts, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the civil rights movement, the Provisional IRA, the Orange Order and unionist political parties all harnessed musical culture's communality and sociability. Bands, communal singing, and intimidating performance practices allowed groups to claim transient authority over political spaces, ignoring would-be boundaries through the mobility of sound and, later, radio waves. In the language and performance practices of political music, opposing groups constructed historical narratives that gave them legitimacy and challenged that of their opponents. They appropriated rituals and tunes from the British army, the British State, their opponents, and their chosen political forebears. This was selective. The IRA did not commemorate John Redmond as the Hibernians would after partition. The Blueshirts did not sing of the anti-Treaty IRA as did Fianna Fáil. Mainstream parties in the Republic of Ireland romanticised the violence of 1916 in their musical performances, but did not sing about 'Sean South of Garryowen' nor the 'Men Behind the Wire'. These were different iterations of a single musical tradition. Likewise in terms of style and cultural function, there were more similarities within and between unionist and nationalist musical cultures than differences. However, the similarities between Catholic and Protestant culture stressed by nationalists are not the similarities that emerge from the sixth, comparative, chapter of this thesis. Instead, the similarities lay in a common appeal to powerful, historical and masculine rhetoric and a common appropriation of transnational musical cultures.

Assessing Irish history through music, therefore, problematises divisions between Irish and British cultures, nationalist and unionist, modern and traditional, and highlights the extent to which these movements were culturally fractured. The longevity of Irish

musical cultures is not the result of their primeval appeal to ingrained prejudices, but rather of the willingness and ability of their advocates to reappropriate them. Cultural revival, music hall, State ritual, dance hall, radio, television, ballet, folk music, gospel and progressive rock each represented new, disruptive, international influences on Irish musical culture. Ireland's music and dance revivals were often inspired by and dependent upon these international movements and innovations. Even when activists attacked transnational cultures, they or others were willing to harness them. As this analysis of Irish musical culture demonstrates, the spirit of Irish nationalism lay in its ability to adapt its form, language, and politics.

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- D4367/3/3, Minute book of Whiterock Temperance LOL 974.
- D4367/3/4, Minute book of Whiterock Temperance LOL 974.
- D4367/4/1/1, Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18.
- D4367/4/1/2, Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18.
- D4367/4/1/3, Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18.
- D4367/4/1/4, Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18.
- D4367/4/1/5, Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18.
- D4367/4/1/6, Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18.
- D4367/4/1/7, Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18.
- D4367/4/1/8, Minute Book of Bangor District LOL 18.
- D4446/B/1/18, Ephemera relating to the Apprentice Boys of Derry.
- D/4504/8/3/7, Newsletters, Including Peace by Peace.
- D4590/2, Large black and white photograph described as ' Whiterock Flute Band of Shankill Road Orange Lodge, preparing to march in Londonderry with the Apprentice Boys'.
- DED/6/27, Republican Clubs.
- ED/13/2/873, Being Young in West Belfast.
- GOV/2/1/167, Ancient Order of Hibernians.
- HA/32/1/651, AOH Proposed Demonstration in Portglenone.
- HA/2/2/1, Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act Instructions for Treatment of Internees 1922.
- HA/4/2/29, Mary MacSwiney.
- HA/5/108, File relating to boycott of Belfast goods at Aughnacloy, Co. Tyrone, by Sinn Féin.
- HA/5/542, AOH Demonstration Fired On.
- HA/5/1311, Sinn Féin Advertisement sent to Armagh Guardian.
- HA/5/1476, Lady Day Demonstration at Armagh.

HA/8/489, Attack on Procession of Ancient Order of Hibernian at Ballinderry.
 HA/23/1/30, Civil Authorities of Northern Ireland (Special Powers) Act.
 HA/23/1/114, Parliamentary Question.
 HA/23/1/115, Parliamentary Question.
 HA/23/1/210, Parliamentary Question.
 HA/23/1/321, AOH Meetings, Commemorations.
 HA/32/1/29, Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Bill.
 HA/32/1/419, Question in House of Commons.
 HA/32/1/458, Wolfe Tone Commemoration.
 HA/32/1/471, Prohibition of Proposed Céilidhe to be held in Armagh.
 HA/32/1/479, Prohibited Meetings Langan Urban District.
 HA/32/1/522, AOH Procession Fired On.
 HA/32/1/621, Proposed Legislation Prohibiting the Soldier's Song.
 HA/32/1/653, Ancient Order of Hibernians Castledawson.
 HA/32/2/11, Free Presbyterian Church in Ulster.
 HA/32/2/13, Sinn Féin and Republican Clubs.
 HA/32/2/28, Civil Rights Demonstration General.
 LA/7/3/A/9, Armistice Day.
 LA/7/3/A/16, Armistice Day and Cenotaph.
 LA/7/16/BA/5, Bundle of booklets detailing the order of proceedings at Armistice Day
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 MIC337/3, Letters from William Johnston MP.
 MIC665/4, Typed copy of a letter from Sir James Stronge, Grand Master of the Orange
 Lodge of Ireland.
 MIC665/17, Personal diary of Lady Carson.
 NIA/8/13, Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report of Debates Vol. 16.
 PM/5/113/1, Apprentice Boys of Derry; General Committee.
 T2879/1, Copy typescript of auto-biographical recollections of Miss [Margaret Rose]
 Houston.
 T3922/2/15, Print-out of a black and white image depicting graffiti on a wall on an
 unidentified street; the graffiti reads Gusty [Gusty Spence] Kick the Pope.

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List of Illustrations

Figure 1 – 'God Save Ireland', Nation, 7 th Dec. 1867.....	46
Figure 2 - The St James's Band plays at Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's Funeral, 1915 (NLI, KE234).	97
Figure 3 – The Ballykinlar No. 1 Camp Violin Class. Peadar Kearney can be seen in the second row from the back, third from the right. Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum (19PO-1A32-28).....	103
Figure 4 – Constance Markievicz, 'These were the songs of Irish Ireland', c. 1922 (NLI, PD3076TX18).	125
Figure 5 – West Cork Ballad – The Fiddler plays for the Shopkeeper's Daughter (JDMAF, Ó Riada Collaborations).....	283
Figure 6 – Dancers Domy Reiter-Soffer and Julia Cotter in West Cork Ballad as the Fiddler and Shopkeeper's Daughter. Cotter performs an arabesque (JDMAF, Ó Riada Collaborations).	284