Farewell to Erin:

Oral Histories of Post-War Irish Music & Migration

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Declaration

This dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted for another degree at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Signed _____

Abstract

Between 1945 and 1970 over 665,000 men and women left Ireland for destinations across the globe. This study focuses on the society they left and the two primary receiving countries, the United States and Great Britain, with particular reference to the cities of London, New York, Chicago, and Boston. Using transnational and comparative historical analysis, I examine the Irish communities in those locales and movements and connections between them. Traditional music acts as a case study of the role of cultural practices and the ways they shaped and reflected ethnic identities. The main sources utilized are forty-one original oral history interviews with musicians and singers who emigrated between 1945 and 1970. A selection of these appears in the accompanying digital archive, 'Voices of Irish Music & Migration'. In addition, existing archival collections and published memoirs reveal diverse and evolving attitudes towards music in Ireland and across the diaspora. The unique significance of these sources is their insights into personal experiences and the meaning given to them in life stories. In the context of social and cultural history, they offer a window into the making of a generation.

Chapter 1 addresses methodological approaches to oral history and the creation of a digital archive. The structure of the remaining chapters follows the migrants' life course. Chapter 2 examines Irish society and culture in the period in which the interviewees grew up, a necessary consideration because it shaped their outlook and later experiences. The Irish in the United States and Great Britain in the post-war era are the subjects of Chapters 3 and 4. Both assess the nature of those varied communities and offer points of comparison on the themes of work, class, gender, social life, ethnicity, and culture. Together they support the argument that in America, post-war Irish migrants had to negotiate expectations, not only of the host society, but of earlier generations and their descendants in defining the ethnic group; while in Britain the post-war generation were able to define the group by virtue of their larger numbers, but they found themselves marginalized within British society. Chapter 5 examines migrants' changing attitudes to Ireland and the question of return migration in a life story context. As a whole, this dissertation argues that while each individual has a unique story, examining music and its social contexts provides insights into their points of connection and varied experiences.

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List of Abbreviations

AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
AIA NYU	Archives of Irish America, New York University
AIB LMU	Archive of the Irish in Britain, London Metropolitan University
CCÉ	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
DIPPAM	Documenting Ireland: Parliament, People and Migration
EFDSS	English Folk Dance and Song Society
EIOHP	Ellis Island Oral History Project
ESB	Electricity Supply Board (Ireland)
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
IMAA	Irish Musicians' Association of America
IQDA	Irish Qualitative Data Archive
ITMA	Irish Traditional Music Archive
IVRLA	Irish Virtual Research Library and Archive
MOA	Mass Observation Archive
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NA UK	National Archives, UK
NEFMA	New England Folk Music Archive
NHS	National Health Service (UK)
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
OHMS	Oral History Metadata Synchronizer
RH BL	Reg Hall collection, British Library
UCC	University College Cork
NFC UCD	Natioanl Folklore Collection, University College Dublin
YCL	Young Communist League

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Clockwise from top left: Jimmy Marshall and Larry Reynolds; Jerry Lynch and his daughter Tara; Eamon Flynn (fiddle); Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin (singing); Danny Meehan outside the restored cottage where he grew up; the author playing a tune with Kevin Henry; Sean Chamberlain and the box that held generations of his family's letters; Brendan Tonra and Helen Kisiel.

Introduction

Early on a Sunday afternoon in the late 1960s men and women from across Ireland gather in a small pub in north London. The room fills with a buzz of chatter as they exchange greetings. In the corner, a piano and microphone stand on a small stage. Behind them sit Reg Hall and Jimmy Power, keeping an eye on musicians who come through the door with fiddles or accordions tucked under their arms and flutes hidden in jacket pockets. Some head into the back bar for a quiet pint and others stand around listening to the music, occasionally shouting encouragement. All will get their turn to play a tune. Now Jimmy calls on Lucy Farr and Andy O'Boyle to join him. Three fiddles launch into a lively reel, 'Farewell to Erin', piano chords bouncing in the background. Bill Leader's tape recorder captures their performance and it appears on the 1968 Topic Records album *Paddy in the Smoke*.[1] The origins of the tune and its name recede into the distant past, but, captured at a moment in time, sound becomes history. Tunes travel with the musicians who play them, entering the soundscapes of the diaspora as they bid 'Farewell to Erin'. They leave the farms and towns of Ireland for new lives, carrying with them their culture and history. Whether in London's pubs, Boston's kitchens, or Chicago's dance halls, the traditional music of the Irish countryside takes on new resonance. For musicians and singers, it centres their community and identities. For listeners and dancers, it provides a familiar backdrop for their social lives, conversations, and courtships. For those who scorn it, it symbolizes Ireland's poverty, which they have left behind. These meanings inhere not in the music itself, but in the ways it is spoken about, played, and heard.[2] Through the voices, melodies, and songs of the post-war migrant generation, we hear history.

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[1] This scene description is based on several sources: Reg Hall, interview with the author, 3 July 2012; Kevin McDermott, interview with the author, 10 Dec. 2011; Kevin McDermott, 'Just a Memory: A Favourite London Pub', *Ireland's Own*, 23 Feb. 2007; Sean O'Shea, interview with the author, 2 July 2012; Various artists, *Paddy in the Smoke: Irish Dance Music from a London Pub*, Topic 12T176 (London, 1968).

[2] Kathleen Neils Conzen, 'Stories Immigrants Tell,' *Swedish American Historical Quarterly*, vol.46 (1995), pp.49-57; Helen O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2006), p.6; Richard Cullen Rath, 'Hearing American History', *Journal of American History*, vol.95, no.2 (Sept. 2008), p.419.

In this dissertation I analyze the intersectionality of culture, work, social life, and ethnicity in Irish migrants' lives. I rely primarily upon original oral histories collected from traditional musicians in Ireland, Great Britain, and America. While others have examined public discourses surrounding this generation,[3] I concentrate on how they construct their personal narratives. Their stories offer a unique way of looking at the social networks and cultural connections linking Ireland and her diaspora. Between the censuses of 1946 and 1971, Ireland's net migration amounted to an estimated loss of over 665,000 people.[4] They left for destinations across the globe and over eighty percent chose Great Britain and the United States. They followed patterns established by earlier generations and networks of relatives and kin, but nonetheless they had to negotiate their own place in society. With this in mind, the central research questions in this study are: How do individuals position themselves within historical narratives and contemporary discourses of migration? What role did traditional music play in the formation of Irish communities in the post-war era? Did active participation in Irish cultural activities influence a developing sense of 'Irishness' among musicians and their audiences? How did migrants remain connected to Ireland in mental, cultural, or physical ways? How did these elements differ in localities in the United States and Great Britain and why? In seeking to answer these questions I draw on a diverse range of sources and interdisciplinary approaches, pulling them into a new historical perspective on post-Second World War Irish migration, culture, and identity.

In his memoir, *Three Villages*, journalist Donal Foley recalls writing a story about Connemara migrants in Huddersfield, Yorkshire. Following a Catholic mission in the Irish language, he went to a men's lodging house and then out to the pub where they drank and sang songs. He reflected, 'it was a great Irish night and an insight into one of the reasons why the Gaeltacht at home was dying. There were no jobs and consequently no porter for people. Culture I learned that night is about having jobs as well as language, songs and dancing.'[5] Unlike Ireland, British and

[3] For example: Ellen Hazelkorn, '"We Can't All Live on a Small Island": The Political Economy of Irish Migration', in P. O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History, Heritage, Identity*. Vol. 2, *The Irish in New Communities* (Leicester University Press, London, 1992); Clair Wills, *The Best Are Leaving: Emigration and Post-War Irish Culture* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015).
[4] Gross estimates would be much higher. Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4, table 1; National Economic and Social Council, *The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration* (NESC, Dublin, 1991), p.55.
[5] Donal Foley, *Three Villages: An Autobiography* (Ballylough Books, Dublin, 2003), p.108; Donal Foley, 'Yorkshire has its Gaeltacht', *Irish Press*, 31 Jan. 1955.

American cities in the post-war era offered employment opportunities and consequently new Irish communities developed there. Foley's observations are reminiscent of John Bodnar's concept of the 'culture of everyday life', which remains compelling three decades after he formulated it.[6] As Bodnar argues, new ethnic cultures emerged from a nexus of homeland traditions and present realities and thus relate intimately to all aspects of migrants' lives, their thoughts, actions, identities, and mentalities. Questions of national belonging or ethnic identity may not have actively concerned them on a day-to-day basis, but as Rogers Brubaker writes, 'social life is pervasively, though unevenly, structured along ethnic lines, and ethnicity "happens" in a variety of everyday settings.'[7] I argue that music, as an everyday cultural practice, influences and reflects identities and experiences of migration.

I. Frameworks: Migration, Transnationalism & Comparison

Flute player and piper Kevin Henry left his home on the Sligo-Mayo border in 1947 to join his brother in Lincolnshire. Over the next ten years he lived in at least eighteen places in four countries: he moved all over England, back to Ireland, on a ship across the Atlantic to Canada, over the American border at Niagra Falls, from New York City to Florida to Chicago to Butte, Montana and back to Chicago, where he met his wife and settled down. He worked as an agricultural labourer, miner, tunnel digger, waiter, dance hall musician, carpenter, and, finally, as an iron worker for thirty-seven years. At the beginning of the interview in April 2013 he reflected,

> Nobody believes in fairy stories and that stuff anymore, but in my part of the country 'twas a big tradition of telling fairy stories to us kids. When you grew up looking for this pot of gold, if you know what I mean, and through this pot of gold in your mind you went out into the world and you started looking for that pot of gold, you didn't look for anything but the best, especially the money part of it, if you know what I mean.[8]

Though the 'pot of gold' may partially refer to money, it implies more than that. It suggests an unwillingness to be satisfied with his lot in life as it was given. A pot of gold is not something one receives, but something that must be sought. Kevin framed his life story around this quest, showing the continued relevance of the values and traditions from his youth. Throughout his life he also maintained contact with his

[6] John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1985), pp.208-11.
[7] Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006), p.2.
[8] Kevin Henry, interview with the author, 19 April 2013.

siblings, spread across Ireland, Britain, and America, and his love of Irish traditional music connected him to his culture and identity. How do we even begin to interpret the complexities of his life story?

A variety of analytical frameworks seek to describe how migration operates and the nature of the world it creates. Migration, in contemporary discourse, is understood as a process. Piaras Mac Éinrí writes that we now 'live in a more fluid universe in which the *condition* or *state* of migration itself is receiving attention – the word *migrancy* is increasingly used. Moreover, there is a sense in which the *identity of the migrant is seen as central* and is no longer seen as a fixed category but as a *process of becoming*'. [9] Migration transforms people, places, societies, and mentalities. I have chosen to use the terms migration and migrants rather than emigration/emigrants or immigration/immigrants. The latter 'already contain their own narrative'; they carry emotional weight and a 'point of view' that 'may well be that of the nation state, or the would-be nation state, across whose borders the travellers have journeyed.' Focus on international borders 'can be misleading'.[10] I therefore use the terms emigration and immigration only when addressing the act of leaving or the act of settling in a new place and representations of those moments. Migration has a more dynamic connotation that allows for transnational ties and movements.[11] Its use moves this research away from the demographic and economic approaches that earlier scholars such as John A. Jackson favoured and which marginalized migration's human element.[12] Referring to the individuals in this study as migrants more accurately reflects their life stories, because they undertook multiple movements over time and remained connected to the land of their birth while also negotiating new circumstances.

'Diaspora' frequently features in discourses of Irish migration, used broadly to encapsulate all people of Irish birth or descent living outside Ireland. As the nation

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[9] Emphasis in original. Piaras Mac Éinrí, 'States of Becoming: Is There a "Here" Here and a "There" There?' Centre for Migration Studies, University College Cork (1998).
[10] Patrick O'Sullivan, 'Introduction', in P. O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History, Heritage, Identity*, Vol.4, *Irish Women and Irish Migration* (Leicester University Press, London & New York, 1995), pp.2-3.
[11] Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (Routledge, London & New York, 1994), p.5; Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity* (Berg, Oxford, 2000), p.45; Dick Hoerder, 'Historians and Their Data: The Complex Shift from Nation-State Approaches to the Study of Transcultural Lives', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol.25, no.4 (Summer 2006), pp.86, 90-1; Louise Ryan, 'Family Matters: (E)migration, Familial Networks and Irish Women in Britain', *The Sociological Review*, vol.52, no.3 (2004), pp.354-5.
[12] John A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1963).

has sought to position itself in an increasingly globalized world, the term's usage has expanded so much that it has lost meaning.[13] In order to function as an *explanatory framework* for historical study (rather than simply an entity), diaspora's characteristics and implications require clarification. Most scholars agree on three basic features: at least two migrant destinations; a relationship to an actual or imagined homeland; and consciousness of group identity.[14] Kevin Kenny and Kim Butler add two other features: connectedness between diasporic sites and existence across generations.[15] Diaspora also has historic associatiations with forced departures, as in the case of the Jews, enslaved Africans, and Armenians. The only period in Irish history for which all these qualifications might apply is the Famine of the 1840s, which tends to eclipse other circumstances, particularly in Irish-American historical memory.[16] Lumping Famine migrants together with all people who left Ireland for many global destinations across several centuries can have a homogenizing effect, overshadowing issues of social class and changing contexts over space and time.[17] The migrants I interviewed recognize the existence of a multi-generational and multi-sited Irish community – the Irish diaspora – thereby meeting the first four qualifications listed. However, I do not use diaspora as an analytical framework because of its transhistorical and transgenerational attributes.[18]

In understanding the lives of post-war Irish migrants, I have found transnationalism more useful. The two concepts are closely related: we can consider diaspora a type of transnational relationship, but not all transnational relationships are diasporic. Like diaspora, transnationalism draws attention to connectedness

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[13] Deirdre Conlon, '"Germs" in the Heart of the Other: Emigrant Scripts, the Celtic Tiger and Lived Realities of Return', *Irish Geography*, vol.42, no.1 (2009), p.108.
[14] Kim Butler, 'Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse', *Diaspora*, vol.10, no.2 (2001), p.192; James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol.9, no.3 (Aug. 1994), p.305.
[15] Butler, 'Defining Diaspora', p.192, 207; Kevin Kenny, *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013), pp.13-4.
[16] Reginald Byron, *Irish America* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.84-92, 293-4; Kenny, *Diaspora*, pp.28-31; Kevin O'Neill, 'The Star-Spangled Shamrock: Meaning and Memory in Irish America', in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), p.118; Mary Kelly, *Ireland's Great Famine in Irish-American History: Enshrining a Fateful Memory* (Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 2014).
[17] David Lloyd, 'What's in a Name: The Dialectics of Diaspora and Irish Emigration', *Breac* (April 2013); Mac Éinrí, 'States of Becoming'; Timothy J. Meagher, 'Irish America without Ireland: Irish-American Relations with Ireland in the Twentieth Century', in N. Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational Perspectives on Modern Irish History* (Routledge, New York & London, 2015), p.190.
[18] Enda Delaney, Kevin Kenny & Donald M. MacRaild, 'Symposium: Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora', *Irish Economic and Social History*, vol.33 (2006), pp.35-58; Breda Gray, *Women and the Irish Diaspora* (Routledge, London & New York, 2004), p.9; Mary Hickman, 'Diaspora Space and National (Re)Formations', *Éire-Ireland*, vol.47, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2012), p.22.

across borders. While diaspora focuses primarily on orientation towards the homeland and cultural distinctiveness within the host country, transnationalism leaves room for multiple ways of belonging, for simultaneous identification with the places of origin and residence.[19] It suits the contemporary understanding of migration as a process because it addresses multiple movements, flows, and circulations across space and time.[20] Where diaspora focuses on groups and collective identity, transnationalism draws attention to individuals.[21] Where diaspora is useful for multi-generational study, transnationalism is more appropriate for first-generation migrants like my interviewees. Deacon, Russell, and Woollacott write in their introduction to *Transnational Lives*, 'individual identity and attachment have long been shaped by the global reach of culture and thought, and by the diasporic movements of people. This has been as true for the disempowered as it has for the elite.'[22] Oral history contributes to our understanding of these processes. It offers the potential to follow ordinary people across space and time and to reconstruct 'the complexities of lived experience', their social networks and identities.[23] Within Irish national historiographical trends, transnational perspectives have developed in recent years as scholars increasingly recognize the need to look 'beyond the island' to critically examine multidirectional ties between the diaspora and the homeland.[24]

Both diaspora and transnationalism undermine the nation-state's primacy as a unit of historical analysis. Comparative history complements these perspectives by highlighting differences and similarities between nations or regions. Like transnationalism, it demonstrates how a multi-country study can illuminate the significance of historical developments that a national focus might obscure or take

[19] Thomas Faist, 'Diaspora and Transnationalism: What Kind of Dance Partners?', in R. Bauböck & T. Faist (eds.), *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* (IMSCOE Research, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2010), pp.20-1.
[20] Isabel Hofmeyr, in Chris Bayly et al., 'AHR Conversation: On Transnational History', *American Historical Review*, vol.111, no.5 (Dec. 2006), p.1444.
[21] Patricia Seed, in Bayly et al, 'AHR Conversation: On Transnational History', p.1443; Patricia Clavin 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History*, vol.14, no.4 (Nov. 2005), p.422.
[22] Desley Deacon, Penny Russell & Angela Woollacott, 'Introduction' to *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700-present* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2010), p.5.
[23] Enda Delaney, 'Directions in Historiography: Our Island Story? Towards a Transnational History of Late Modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol.37, no.148 (Nov. 2011), pp.95-6.
[24] Ibid.; Niall Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational Perspectives on Modern Irish History* (Routledge, London, 2015). The work of the Transnational Ireland Network exemplifies these trends.

for granted.[25] But where transnationalism examines links, comparison highlights disjuncture. It helps offset the homogenizing effects of diaspora, drawing attention to changes over time, between generations, and 'the formation of nationally specific ethnic identities in the different places where migrants settled'.[26] My research is necessarily comparative because the interviewees left Ireland for both Great Britain and the United States. I compare these cases on national and local levels, primarily addressing the cities of London, Boston, New York, and Chicago. Defining these scales allows for 'the minimum necessary abstraction, and the maximum possible detail and context'.[27] Comparison has its challenges, particularly because it necessitates familiarity with multiple national historiographies and sources, but its potential to spark new questions and underscore historical contingencies make it worthwhile.

The research I present here can qualify under all three headings of diasporic, transnational, and comparative history: Diasporic because it concerns multiple areas of Irish settlement abroad and because migrants recognized that they were part of and moved within a global Irish community; transnational because migrants lived across national borders in terms of both their movements and mentalities; and comparative, because I juxtapose national and local contexts, highlighting ways in which they influenced individual and collective experiences and identities. Balancing these perspectives safeguards against generalization.[28] In interpreting processes of migration and migrants' lives, I rely primarily upon the complementary frameworks of transnational and comparative history, which together allow for recognition of national borders' significance in determining historical experience, as well as the movements and networks that supersede them. (I use the term diaspora only when referring to an entity; I do not use it as a mode of analysis.) What results is 'a new, integrated perspective on the past' that unites demographic, economic, political, and geographic specificities with 'the fluidity, hybridity, and frequent ambiguity of transnational interactions'.[29] Historians Jon Gjerde, Kevin Kenny, and Enda Delaney

[25] Deborah Cohen, 'Comparative History: Buyer Beware', in D. Cohen & M. O'Connor (eds.), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (Routledge, London & New York, 2004), p.59.
[26] Kevin Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study', *The Journal of American History*, vol.90, no.1 (June 2003), p.146.
[27] Heinz-Gerhard Haupt & Jürgen Kocka, 'Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems', in Cohen & O'Connor (eds.), *Comparison and History*, p.26.
[28] Niall Whelehan, 'Introduction', in Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational Perspectives*, p.2.
[29] Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison', pp.148-50, 161-2.

have all called for this type of approach to migration studies and my research offers a model for its application to cultural history.[30]

II. Concepts: Identity, Culture & Music in Everyday Life

Studies of migrant cultures and identities tend to focus on their outward manifestations, such as religion, ethnic associations, and literature. Available sources and public visibility largely dictate this trend: official organizations leave records and writers publish. However, the very existence of these documents 'illustrate[s] how expression[s] of Irishness in the public forum were carefully contrived, promoting positive cultural images' and counteracting stereotypes.[31] They do not necessarily reflect migrants' everyday experiences of identity, but rather the voice of people who chose to be seen and heard.[32] Oral history balances this perspective by offering access to knowledge of other social venues, cultural practices, and private lives. In the case of the traditional musicians I interviewed, their music never constituted a bounded entity within their lives; it is inseparable from their experiences as migrants, workers, and Irishmen and women. Music brought them together, displacing feelings of marginalization, while its varied iterations and performance settings highlighted class and regional divisions. In his studies of American cultural history Lawrence Levine has demonstrated that beneath the surface we find that 'what looked like a group becomes an amalgam of groups; what looked like a culture becomes a series of cultures': this 'is not the complexity of specialized languages or esoteric methodologies but the complexity of people and the cultures they create.'[33] This dissertation relies on an array of concepts – including identity, ethnicity, and culture – to analyze how migrants orient themselves and their activities and to situate them in their social and historical contexts. In this section I

[30] Delaney, 'Directions in Historiography: Our Island Story?'; Jon Gjerde, 'New Growth on Old Vines – The State of the Field: The Social History of Immigration to and Ethnicity in the United States', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol.18, no.4 (Summer 1999), pp.40-65; Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison', pp.161-2.
[31] Sarah O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity in Post-War Birmingham' (Ph.D. diss., Mary Immaculate College, 2009), p.12.
[32] Choosing to write an autobiography is an assertion of narrative agency and thus the works that exist 'embody the perspectives of an *extra*-ordinary, even idiosyncratic, literary minority of migrants'. Liam Harte, '"Loss, Return, and Restitution": Autobiography and Irish Diasporic Subjectivity', in Liam Harte (ed.), *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2007), p.92; Liam Harte, *The Literature of the Irish in Britain: Autobiography and Memoir, 1725-2001* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2009), p.xx.
[33] Lawrence Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 1993), pp.11-12.

define my usage of those terms, their place in the 'culture of everyday life', their associated disciplinary methods, and their significance to my research.

As historians and cultural studies theorists argue, identity, ethnicity, and culture are constantly negotiated and contested, interpreted and performed.[34] Identity has many facets at the collective and individual level: it exists at the nexus of how a person perceives him/herself and how society perceives the individual or group.[35] These perceptions have a dialectical influence upon each other. Ethnicity, as a form of identity, emerges out of processes of migration and cultural contact. Kathleen Neils Conzen and her co-authors argue that it is a product of history and changes over time in a dynamic 'process of construction or invention… grounded in real life context and social experience'.[36] Though they advance this theory in relation to the United States, it can apply to migrants elsewhere. It results in a historicized conception of ethnicity as a form of identity emerging from contestation and negotiation between the migrant, the migrant group, and the host societies and constantly recreated in response to alterations in the dynamic between them. Much of the literature and theory on ethnicity relates to multigenerational groups, whereas the oral histories and research presented here primarily concern first-generation migrants. The identity of the narrators as Irish is rarely in question, but the same type of negotiations take place over the meaning of their Irishness.

Culture is relevant to ethnicity and personal and collective identities because all concern 'the construction of boundaries and the production of meaning'.[37] I use culture in the sense defined by Stuart Hall: a system of shared ideas and practices that have the appearance of rootedness in the past (and which therefore anchors

[34] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (Routledge, London & New York, 1996); James Clifford, 'Introduction: Partial Truths', in Clifford & Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture*, pp.18-9; Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta & Rudolph J. Vecoli, 'The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol.12, no.1 (Fall 1992), pp.3-41; Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1990); Stuart Hall & Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (Sage, London, 1996); Joane Nagel, 'Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture,' *Social Problems*, vol.41, no.1, *Special Issue on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America* (Feb. 1994), pp.152-76.
[35] Piaras Mac Éinrí & Brian Lambkin, 'Whose Diaspora? Whose Migration? Whose Identity? Some Current Issues in Irish Migration Studies', *Irish Journal of Psychology*, vol.23, nos.3-4 (2002), p.130.
[36] Conzen et al., 'The Invention of Ethnicity in the United States', p.5. The authors mediate between the extremes of inherent and invented ethnicity put forward by Werner Sollors and Clifford Geertz respectively.
[37] Nagel, 'Constructing Ethnicity', p.153.

identity), while working dynamically in the present.[38] Studying culture becomes a search for meaning through interpretation.[39] Conzen writes, 'if we understand culture not so much as a template or a set of given rules' but as 'socially produced structures of meaning engendered by and expressed in public behaviours, languages, images, institutions', then,

> since it inheres in the social discourse, [it] is never lost, unless interaction ceases. What is 'said' may change, but the saying continues. If we think of culture less as a variable that 'explains' immigrant life, or a datum that documents persisting ethnicity, and more as the publicly constructed meanings in and through which that life is lived, then we can also begin to explore directly how those meanings are constructed and constantly reconstructed over time.[40]

In this formulation, culture reveals processes of meaning-making, diachronically and synchronically, as it is reconstructed to suit the mores of the age.[41] It is not a static entity; it exists through words and actions. Cultural historians, like myself, study these processes. However, in Ireland the field remains underdeveloped and for many historians including 'culture' seems to mean throwing in quotations from writers such as W.B. Yeats or Patrick Kavanagh or references to theatre productions, all part of a relatively restricted cultural sphere.[42] Patrick Joyce also criticizes cultural history for focusing only on 'identity' without adequate assessment of the 'cultural'. Nonetheless, cultural practices are central to the development of identity (whether in its singular or plural sense) and these forms of human expression should not be cordoned off from their historical and social contexts.[43] My work incorporates music and music-making into historical scholarship and analysis, contributing to the growth of cultural history in Ireland and the Irish diaspora.

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[38] Stuart Hall, 'New Cultures for Old', in D. Massey & P. Jess (eds.), *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization* (Oxford University Press & Open University, Oxford, 1995), p.176.
[39] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 2nd ed. (Basic Books, New York, 2003), p.5.
[40] Kathleen Neils Conzen, 'Mainstreams and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol.11, no.1 (Fall 1991), p.12.
[41] Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1988), p.240.
[42] For example, Terence Brown's book, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002*, 2nd ed. (Harper Perennial, London, 2004), in 426 pages makes only five references to music and only two of those are to traditional music.
[43] Patrick Joyce, 'The End of Social History?', *Social History*, vol. 20, no.1 (Jan. 1995), p.82; Patrick Joyce, 'What is the Social in Social History?', *Past and Present*, no.206 (Feb. 2010), p.220; Ríonach Uí Ógáin, 'Traditional Music and Irish Cultural History', in G. Gillen & H. White (eds.), *Irish Musical Studies*, Vol.3, *Music and Irish Cultural History* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1995), p.90.

Music serves as an important 'cultural sphere in which identities are affirmed, challenged, taken apart and reconstructed'.[44] It constitutes a universal form of human expression and its 'vital context is the social life and culture of the community'.[45] Meaning does not inhere in the sounds themselves, but in their auditory associations. Situating music and culture within historical experience mitigates the problem of its 'insubstantial' nature; the fact that 'it does not exist apart from what people do'.[46] Historians and social scientists, despite the cultural turn, have 'kept music at arm's length from culture because it is so many "notes on a page," a technical language spoken by specialists' and therefore perceived as inaccessible.[47] Even interdisciplinary conferences relegate music to separate panels and the background of wine receptions.[48] Potential exists to rectify this imbalance and ethnomusicology's growth since the late 1990s has heralded a shift in music studies from text-based to performance- and participation-based understandings of music that contextualize it socially and historically.[49] The scholarship of music, ethnicity, and diaspora has also developed from a focus on localities or groups towards greater awareness of music's complexity and its role in the creation of identities and cultural meanings.[50] In recent years ethnomusicologists have

[44] John Connell & Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place* (Routledge, London & New York, 2003), p.117; Lawrence Kramer, 'Subjectivity Rampant! Music, Hermeneutics and History', in M. Clayton, T. Herbert & R. Middleton (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge, London & New York, 2003), pp.124-35.

[45] Though made in relation to songs, this comment applies to other forms of music as well. Breandán Ó Madagáin, 'Functions of Irish Song in the Nineteenth Century', *Béaloideas*, vol.53 (1985), p.132. See also: Robert Cantwell, *If Beale Street Could Talk: Music, Community, Culture* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana & Chicago, 2008), pp.8-9.

[46] Anthony Cohen, 'Culture as Identity: An Anthropologist's View', *New Literary History*, vol.24, no.1, *Culture and Everyday Life* (Winter 1993), p.207; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp.29-30.

[47] Philip V. Bohlman, 'Music and Culture: Historiographies of Disjuncture', in Clayton et al (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music*, p.45.

[48] This has been my own experience at the American Conference for Irish Studies. Others have noted similar experiences: Michelle Bigenho, 'Why I'm not an Ethnomusicologist: A View from Anthropology', in H. Stobart (ed.), *The New (Ethno)Musicologies* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD, 2008), pp.28-39; Martin Dowling, *Traditional Music and Irish Society: Historical Perspectives* (Ashgate, Surrey, UK, 2014), p.3.

[49] Adelaida Reyes, 'What Do Ethnomusicologists Do? An Old Question for a New Century,' *Ethnomusicology*, vol.53, no.1 (Winter 2009), p.14; John Shepherd, 'Music and Social Categories', in Clayton et al (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music*, pp.69-79; Jonathan P.J. Stock, 'New Directions in Ethnomusicology: Seven Themes toward Disciplinary Renewal,' in H. Stobart (ed.), *The New (Ethno)Musicologies* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD, 2008), pp.198-9.

[50] Tina K. Ramnarine, 'Musical Performance in the Diaspora: Introduction,' *Ethnomusicology Forum*, vol.16, no.1 (June 2007), pp.1-17; Mark Slobin, 'The Destiny of "Diaspora" in Ethnomusicology', in Clayton et al (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music*, pp.284-96; Mark Slobin, 'Music in Diaspora: A View from Euro-America,' *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol.3, no.3 (Winter 1994), pp.243-51.

recognized the need to address historical contexts and historians have acknowledged their concomitant neglect of music: my research contributes to the advancement of both fields and a greater understanding between them.

In an Irish context, music has remained almost entirely absent from historical scholarship, despite its importance as a nationalist symbol.[51] Defining 'traditional music' stirs debate among both academics and musicians, largely centring on questions of authenticity.[52] I use the adjective 'traditional' for Irish instrumental dance music and singing (in Irish and English), practices handed down from one generation to the next generally through oral transmission, evolving along the way.[53] Traditions, whether invented or otherwise, connect people and communities to their past; they 'use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion'.[54] Danny Meehan, whom I interviewed in June 2012, expresses music's personal relevance through a story about famed Donegal fiddler John Doherty:

> I met him when I was twelve in Mountcharles. I spent an hour with him there. My Uncle Dan took me in and he was unbelievable and he made me play. I played, I was listening to Lord Gordon's on Michael Coleman's 78, the five part reel, so I just played two parts. 'Oh,' he said, 'you didn't pick an easy one.' He said, 'well done,' he said, 'it's not a burden to carry.' That word stuck in my mind. He said, 'you can build castles,' he said, 'you can be a rich farmer,' but he said, 'just play your fiddle,' he said, 'it's not a burden to carry'. Even though I was only twelve or thirteen that stuck in my mind. Of course I went off for years in London, messing about all over. I was travelling a lot. It isn't a burden to carry. And at all different stages.[55]

Danny sees himself as a tradition-bearer, or in his words a 'catalyst', and the music as a touchstone, something he carries 'for the old people' and for the next generation.[56] It connects him to past and future. Doherty's phrase 'it's not a burden to carry' remained with him, because continuing the tradition was a personal choice, willingly undertaken and enjoyable throughout his life.

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[51] A recent exception is Martin Dowling's book *Traditional Music and Irish Society*.

[52] For more detailed histories of the tradition and debates see: Martin Dowling, 'Rambling in the Field of Modern Identity: Some Speculations on Irish Traditional Music', *Radharc*, vol.5/7 (2004-2006), pp.107-34; Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music* (O'Brien Press; Irish American Book Co, Dublin & Boulder, Colo., 1998); Uí hÓgáin, 'Traditional Music and Irish Cultural History'; Fintan Vallely, *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music* (Cork University Press, Cork, 1999).

[53] Tomás Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland* (Routledge & K. Paul, London & Boston, 1978), p.1.

[54] Eric J. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in E.J. Hobsbawm & T.O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992), p.12; Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2000), pp.8-9

[55] Danny Meehan, interview with the author, 11 June 2012.

[56] Ibid.

The process of transmission is not neutral: it can be motivated by a desire to define individual or community identities or to express cultural values and consciousness.[57] For migrant musicians and singers, traditional music provided a raft to stay afloat in unfamiliar waters. It had a special meaning because 'it is so rooted historically in Irish social and community life, the repertoire of most performers is deeply embedded in their own personal life histories', with songs and tunes having individual as well as cultural meanings.[58] For people like Danny, the importance of musical traditions emerged not from scholarly or political interests, but from personal, familial, and local connections. Allen Feldman and Eamon O'Doherty write, 'if traditional music is considered as a form of inherited knowledge, the musician possessed the emotional and aesthetic history of his culture in his music… The music conferred identity on a vastly decentralized culture; it was history translated into sound… [The] transfer of the oral tradition between generations connected the community with its own history.'[59] While they make this statement in relation to rural Donegal, it also applies to the 'decentralized culture' or (to borrow from Benedict Anderson) the 'imagined community' of the Irish diaspora.[60]

Music connected Irish people abroad to their history and homeland across generations and geographical distance.[61] Gene Kelly left Co. Kilkenny for New York in the 1920s and reflected several decades later:

> Irish music is the language of Irish people regardless of whatever tongue they take, whether they speak Gaelic or French or Spanish, Irish music is their lingo. It's something that unites them no matter where they are… It's their life. That's why it never died, because there was always somebody in the house that kept it going. If it wasn't the mother it was the father, one of the kids, the cousin in Chicago or Boston or somewhere else and every once in a while they'd get together and it'd come back and survive. 'Twas like a serpent, you couldn't kill it. A lot of people tried to ignore it, forget it, put it out of their minds, but it'll come back… it's like their language or their background, it's a part of them, they just can't get away from it. That's my feeling about the matter anyway.[62]

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[57] Marie McCarthy, *Passing it on: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* (Cork University Press, Cork, 1999), p.13

[58] Mick Moloney, 'Irish Music in America: Continuity and Change' (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1992), pp.409-10.

[59] Allen Feldman & Eamon O'Doherty, *The Northern Fiddler: Music and Musicians of Donegal and Tyrone* (Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1979), pp.24-5.

[60] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (Verso, London & New York, 2006).

[61] Sheila Whiteley, 'Introduction', in S. Whitely, A. Bennett & S. Hawkins (eds.), *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity* (Ashgate, London, 2004), p.4.

[62] Gene Kelly, interview with Mick Moloney, 24 Feb. 1978, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

Likewise, Louis Quinn arrived in New York from Co. Armagh in 1931 and said that for migrant musicians,

> We played it because we liked it. We were homesick. It brought you remembrance of home and the surroundings around home. It did to me, I'm only speaking for myself, but I know plenty others felt the same way about it. It brought back to me years ago where we used to get together in the house where there'd be three or four fiddle players there. You'd run all the way to get to the house to hear it for fear you were going to miss something, you know… It's something naturally possibly that if you felt you wanted to you could banish it from your life altogether, but who would want to? What are you going to replace it with?[63]

Their testimony raises important points: First, some Irish people might have wanted to reject traditional music and all it stood for. Kelly and Quinn believe that they could not walk away from it completely because 'it's a part of them', part of their heritage. Second, they played traditional music because they enjoyed it and it tied them to their Irishness. It is also inseparable from personal links to 'home' and family. Those connections gave it special poignancy. Simon Frith wrote in 2003 that 'future research in music and the everyday needs to integrate the study of music making with the study of musical use': [64] my research does this through analysis not only of how and where Irish migrants played traditional music, but also *why*, what personal and cultural meanings it held, and how those meanings transcended borders.

Identity, culture, and music all must be situated within the realm of everyday life. While theories of everyday life tend to come from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, for social historians, 'to invoke everyday life can be to invoke precisely those practices and lives that have traditionally been left out of historical accounts, swept aside by the onslaught of events instigated by elites'.[65] While this certainly constitutes a large part of my understanding of the phrase, elaboration on it can be constructive in conceptualizing leisure. For Lefebvre, though everyday life is 'residual' (in the sense most historians use it), but, far from being marginal, it 'profoundly relate[s] to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground.'[66] Leisure fits into the whole, because the need for it and its forms

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[63] Louis Quinn, interview with Mick Moloney, 17 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[64] Simon Frith, 'Music and Everyday Life', in Clayton et al (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music*, p.100; Moloney, 'Irish Music in America', pp.409-10.
[65] Ben Highmore (ed.), introduction to *The Everyday Life Reader* (Routledge, London & New York, 2002), p.1.
[66] Emphasis in original. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol.1, trans. John Moore (Verso, London & New York, 1991), p.97.

emerge from a person's attitude towards work, family, politics, culture, and class as well as his or her national and historical context.[67] However, for de Certeau, everyday life can also constitute a realm of resistance. Ideas of usage and consumption are central to his view that, while scholars have studied society's representations and 'modes of behavior', it is also possible 'to determine the *use* to which they are put by groups or individuals'.[68] When everyday life is disrupted, as in the case of migration, it becomes a setting in which to examine dynamic processes of adjustment to disruption and to new ways of life. Analysing the use of space provides one example: we will see that Irish migrants in Britain and America took existing modern, urban spaces and *used* them to facilitate ethnic community and leisure, to escape from the drudgery of work and increase the chances of improving their circumstances. If culture is a system of shared ideas and practices and everyday life is the totality of daily activities, reactions to them, and their relationship in time and space, then a fuller understanding of the 'culture of everyday life' emerges from situating cultural practices within that totality and its historical context.

This aim necessitates interdisciplinary methods and modes of analysis. None of the key concepts I address – identity, ethnicity, culture, tradition, music – exist within the purview of a single academic discipline. While my work has a historical focus, it owes much to other fields including ethnomusicology, geography, sociology, ethnography, and cultural studies. Patrick O'Sullivan argues, 'no one academic discipline is going to tell us everything we want to know about the Irish Diaspora. The study of migration, emigration, immigration, population movements, flight, scattering, networks, transnational communities, diaspora – this study demands an interdisciplinary approach.'[69] Likewise, in the analysis of oral history Alessandro Portelli reminds us that 'human beings do not belong to any one field of scholarly inquiry'.[70] I hope my research will interest scholars across disciplinary and geographical borders. Traditional music and oral history offer lenses through which I examine the processes of migration, acculturation, identity formation, and social change. The interconnectedness of music and culture to all facets of experience – and

[67] Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p.88.
[68] Emphasis in original. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984), p.xii.
[69] Patrick O'Sullivan, 'Developing Irish Diaspora Studies: A Personal View', *Iris Éireannach Nua / New Hibernia Review*, vol.7, no.1 (Spring 2003), p.131.
[70] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (SUNY Press, Albany, 1991), p.xi.

therefore the necessity of using interdisciplinary modes of analysis – anchors the frameworks of my research.

III. Scope & Structure

My interest in the post-war Irish migrant generation began through personal connections. As I immersed myself in learning traditional music during my undergraduate years, I went every Monday to a session at the Green Briar pub in Brighton, outside Boston. East Galway fiddler Larry Reynolds ran the event and welcomed all participants equally, regardless of skill level. There I met Jimmy Marshall, originally from Kilsorcan, Co. Kerry and Brendan Tonra, from Gowlane, Co. Mayo. They were encouraging and supportive, delighted that a younger generation would carry the tradition forward. Curiosity about their stories led me down this path. Sadly, Larry and Brendan have since passed away, but I remain in close contact with Jimmy. Starting with these three gentlemen, over the last six years I interviewed forty-five individuals. The majority left Ireland between 1945 and 1970 and others participated in the music scene in the cities where those migrants settled. 1945 marks the end of the Second World War, which inaugurated a new historical era and a wave of emigration that reached its twentieth-century peak in the mid-1950s. I chose 1970 as the end point because from 1965 the United States introduced new immigration restrictions and as Ireland increasingly prospered, the nature of her migrants changed. The 1970s witnessed net immigration into Ireland, in contrast to earlier decades, and entry into the European Economic Community in 1973 marked a milestone in Irish history.

The nature of oral history sources means that the material I collected relates to a much wider time frame, from the years in which the migrants grew up in Ireland to the present day when they shared their stories. Chapter 1 covers methodologies of oral history and digital humanities that I used in collecting, interpreting, and disseminating my sources. Select interviews, music recordings, and photographs are available from the accompanying digital archive, 'Voices of Irish Music & Migration' (www.musicmigration.com). The structure of the main part of the dissertation (Chapters 2 to 5) follows the basic chronology of the migrant life course from childhood to life abroad and potential return. Chapter 2 examines Ireland's economic, social, and cultural conditions between c.1930 and 1960. It analyzes the way in which the interviewees speak about migration and its relationship to their life

stories. Moya writes that to begin a study 'after the immigrants have reached their destination' is a 'major shortcoming', because 'to focus only on their experiences in the new land is to miss half the story. It treats immigrants as *tabula rasa* and can lead to over-environmentalist conclusions that miss possible continuities and adaptations.'[71] I argue that the society from which the migrants emerged strongly influenced their experiences and the values they carried with them throughout their lives.

Chapters 3 and 4 cover the two primary migrant destinations, the United States and Great Britain. I assess the nature of Irish communities at local and national level on the themes of work, class, gender, social life, ethnicity, and music. As this dissertation focuses on music and informal social practices and their place in migrants' lives, some types of more formal structures (including the Catholic Church, county organizations, and the GAA) are not dealt with at length.[72] I chose to divide these two chapters geographically in order to highlight the differences as well as the similarities. Structure is one of the primary challenges of comparative history, but as Cohen and O'Connor write, 'there are… good reasons to devote separate chapters to each national case, not the least of which are the preferences of readers.'[73] I use a similar structure and section headings within the chapters, covering the subjects of journeys, settlement patterns, work, living conditions, music and social life, associations, and the folk revival, so readers may also choose to examine the material thematically. These chapters support the argument that in the US, post-war Irish migrants had to negotiate expectations not only of the host society, but the dominance of earlier generations and their descendants in defining the ethnic group, while in Britain the post-war generation were able to define the group by virtue of their larger numbers, but they found themselves marginalized within British society.

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[71] Jose C. Moya, 'Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.31, no.5 (Sept. 2005), p.837.

[72] I decided to focus on informal social and cultural practices rather than more formal organizations quite early on in the project. It is not intended denigrate the importance of those structures or their role in aiding migrant adjustment. A secondary reason for this focus stems from my relationship with the interviewees: I approached them as a musician and often through networks of other musicians and our discussions inevitably began from this point of contact. Another interviewer who related to the same people on a different basis and with a different research focus would, of course, have come away with a somewhat different interview or have chosen different interviewees entirely. Other scholars have taken also up these topics at greater length. For example, Miriam Nyhan is currently working on Irish county associations in London and New York City and a recent book by Patricia Kennedy focuses on the role of the Catholic Church in Irish migrant welfare in Britain. *Welcoming the Stranger: Irish Migrant Welfare in Britain since 1957* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2015).

[73] Cohen & O'Connor, *Comparison and History*, p.xxi

The final chapter analyzes the migrants' evolving relationship to their homeland over time and the question of return. Many of my interviewees are returned migrants and they had varied experiences in settling back to life in Ireland. To date, Irish historians have largely neglected the subject of return in the twentieth century; the work that exists comes from the fields of geography and sociology. My interviewees returned between 1961 and 2010, so the chapter necessarily deals with changes in Irish society in that period. It argues that the process of return could pose as many challenges as that of departure and migrants' current circumstances influence how they tell their stories. I hope that, by listening to the interviews available online and referring to the biographies in Appendix 1, readers follow both the threads of individual experience and wider social trends. Where my interviewees are named and quoted in the text, I have not added footnotes; a complete list is available in the bibliography. Overall, I have sought to balance individual voices and their interpretation with overarching themes and historical contexts.

This dissertation makes a significant contribution to current trends in Irish historiography by incorporating music and transnational perspectives into the fold of social and cultural history. In addition, it aligns with a renewed interest in orality in Irish culture and movement towards greater interdisciplinarity. Recreation, including music and dancing, formed an integral part of migrants' experiences and musicians played a central role in constructing a shared culture that their audiences could relate to, or in some cases chose to reject. I argue that negotiations, interpretations, and performances of migrant identity occurred not only in public theatres or on the pages of newspapers, but also in the homes, workplaces, dance halls, pubs, and neighbourhood streets of daily life. Oral histories offer a unique point of access to these experiences. Both musicians and their audiences reflect on the role of culture in their life stories, but musicians are particularly interesting because they *actively* participated in and disseminated that culture. They address what it means to them and also how others perceived it. Migrants' stories and music allow us 'to listen to the sounds of ethnicity' in the post-war era, 'to eavesdrop on public conversations on ethnicity and modernity, community and nation, public culture and transnationalism.'[74]

[74] Barbara Lorenzkowski, *Sounds of Ethnicity: Listening to German North America, 1850-1914* (University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, 2010), p.17

Chapter 1

Oral History & Digital Archives: Methodologies

Oral history can refer to a body of archival sources, the act of collecting them, or to their utilization and interpretation as an area of study within the historical discipline. As the name implies, it is often defined in relation to two other areas, documentary history and oral tradition, though different from both. It relates to the former because it involves capturing the experiences of individuals as fixed 'documents' and to the latter because of its inherent orality.[1] Unfortunately some seem to adhere to a restrictive dichotomy of oral history versus 'written history', associating the former with popular history, local history, or micro-narratives, and the latter with major events, figures, and ideologies.[2] Kevin Kearns, the author of several books on Dublin life and people, calls oral history a corrective to 'the standard written record' because it documents 'the participation of ordinary people in historical circumstances or events' and in doing so it humanises the sometimes 'detached' work of academic historians.[3] While he makes a valid point regarding its democratizing potential, he fails to acknowledge that in practice the contrast between 'oral' and 'written' history proves less definitive. Juxtaposing and integrating the two methods effectively highlights the benefits and limitations of each and creates a more inclusive understanding of the past. This chapter outlines approaches to collecting, analyzing, and disseminating oral histories, with awareness of both benefits and limitations. I place my approach in the context of developments in the field to fully elucidate the methodology underpinning this research.

In its modern form oral history emerged after the Second World War and entered the mainstream by the mid-1960s. Its evolution varied in different locations: in the United States scholars such as Allan Nevins at Columbia University used it in conjunction with political history as another source of information on the lives of

[1] William W. Moss, "Oral History: What is it and where did it come from?" in D. Stricklin & R. Sharpless (eds.), *The Past Meets the Present: Essays on Oral History* (University Press of America, Lanham, NY & London, 1988), pp.9-10.
[2] Guy Beiner & Anna Bryson, 'Listening to the Past and Talking to Each Other: Problems and Possibilities Facing Oral History in Ireland', *Journal of Irish Economic and Social History*, vol.30 (2003), pp.71-8.
[3] Kevin C. Kearns, *Dublin Voices: An Oral Folk History* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1998), pp.4-6.

society's elites, though arguably one of the first projects was the Depression-era Federal Writers' Project collection of narratives from former slaves.[4] In Britain, oral history rose to prominence in connection with social history. One early example of this, the Mass Observation Project, began in 1937 and involved a team of volunteers recording (in writing) their own thoughts and the behaviour and conversations of ordinary people around the country, creating a record for future scholars.[5] These developments took place alongside the proliferation of more affordable and transportable audio recording technology, allowing the capture of voices on tape as well as in writing.

The field's early practitioners set forth lofty goals. Paul Thompson wrote in his landmark 1978 book, *The Voice of the Past*:

> Oral history certainly can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself, and open up new areas of inquiry; it can break down barriers between teachers and students, between generations, between educational institutions and the world outside; and in the writing of history – whether in books, or museums, or radio and film – it can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place.[6]

He outlines two steps necessary for oral history to transform the historical discipline: a change in the content through the chosen subjects of study and a change in purpose by dismantling barriers between academics and everyone else. Ronald Grele writes, 'because oral history is a way of involving people heretofore uninvolved in the creation of documents of the past, it is an opportunity to democratize the nature of history' and to create 'a more conscious history'.[7] Since its emergence, the practice has continued to advance these aims, with a greater awareness of issues of memory and subjectivity from the 1970s, a shift in the perceptions of the role of the researcher by the 1980s, and the on-going digital revolution that is altering the collection and access of oral and visual sources.[8] Today, oral history is found everywhere from primary schools to community groups to academe. Within the latter

[4] Writers employed by the Works Progress Administration collected the stories of former slaves between 1936 and 1938. They are now held at the Library of Congress and available online.
[5] Tom Jeffrey, 'Mass Observation: A Short History', *Mass Observation Archive: Occasional Papers Series*, no.10 (University of Sussex Library, 1999).
[6] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000), p.3.
[7] Ronald J. Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, revised ed. (Praeger, New York, 1991), p.xci.
[8] Alistair Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *The Oral History Review*, vol.34, no.1 (2006), pp.49-70.

it is primarily associated with recording the experiences of ordinary people and historically marginalized groups, particularly women, workers, and migrants.

This rise has not occurred without opposition, which tends to stem from criticisms of the fallibility of memory and a failure to see meaning beyond factual content. A.J.P. Taylor bluntly asserted, 'someone who records things at the time is often reliable. Memoirs of years ago are useless except for atmosphere. Moreover there is a professional recollector who creates myths and forgets what really happened… Every researcher goes to see him and he discusses on television every episode that comes up… [D]iaries, when not rewritten, are useful. But old men drooling about their youth – No.'[9] He presents the classic sceptical view of a 'traditional' historian to oral sources and, several decades later, critics like him remain. Arthur Marwick in *The New Nature of History* only admits to the usefulness of oral history for the 'very recent past'.[10] He clearly rejects unique modes of interpretation, such as those put forward by Alessandro Portelli, saying instead that 'to aver that oral testimony, memoirs and autobiographies, as distinct from all other primary sources (which also require historians to understand their imperfections, codes, conventions and formal devices), need unique specialist treatment is specious nonsense'.[11] Though oral sources may share some characteristics with their written counterparts, their orality – their form (rather than content) – makes them fundamentally different.[12] If Marwick admits that historians must understand the limitations, 'conventions', and 'devices' of different types of primary sources, then to suggest that oral sources do not merit equal or distinct treatment in this regard is a fundamental contradiction. Section II of this chapter sets forward the specific interpretive methods I used in this research.

In Ireland oral history remains a fragmented, though developing, practice. The Oral History Network of Ireland, founded in 2010, is currently working to bring together practitioners and projects across the country. Up to this point most Irish historical works based on oral accounts have concerned labour history and gendered experiences. These include Mary Muldowney's *The Second World War and Irish Women: An Oral History*, Miriam Nyhan's *Are You Still Below? A History of the*

[9] Brian Harrison, 'Oral History and Recent Political History', *Oral History*, vol.1, no.3 (1972), p.46
[10] Arthur Marwick, *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2001), p.135.
[11] Marwick, *The New Nature of History*, p.136.
[12] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, pp.45-6.

Ford Marina Plant, Cork, 1917-84, Betty Messenger's *Picking Up the Linen Threads: Life in Ulster's Mills*, Catriona Clear's *Women of the House: Women's Household Work in Ireland, 1922-1961*, and Máire Leane and Elizabeth Kiely's *Irish Women at Work, 1930-1960*. A number of projects also relate to the Troubles in Northern Ireland and conflict resolution.[13] Published oral history studies of Irish migrants centre almost exclusively on women's lives, perhaps arising from the assumption that conventionally the historical record has marginalized women and reintegrating them merits the use of less conventional sources. Books on female migrants include: Mary Lennon, Marie McAdam and Joanne O'Brien's *Across the Water: Irish Women's Lives in Britain*, Ide O'Carroll's *Models for Movers: Irish Women's Immigration to America* and Sharon Lambert's *Irish Women in Lancashire, 1922-1960: Their Story*. However, this focus results in a concomitant neglect to address men's personal experiences. The only work centring on Irish migrant men using oral testimonies is Ultan Cowley's *The Men Who Built Britain: A History of the Irish Navvy*. Seán Sorohan's recent book, *Irish London During the Troubles*, is one of the few to address both gender perspectives as well as second-generation identity. Several archival projects have collected interviews related to individuals' lives and experiences of migration, but these remain underutilized in historical studies, perhaps due to issues of accessibility.[14]

Oral history scholarship in Ireland has also benefitted from and overlapped with the research of folklorists, social anthropologists, and sociologists. The 1930s witnessed a veritable boom in the industry, with the establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission and the work of the Harvard Irish Study, both of which drew on oral testimonies. Resulting from the latter research in Co. Clare, Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball published their benchmark study, *Family and Community in Ireland*. Following in that tradition of detailed local study, Marilyn Silverman and P.H. Gulliver undertook fieldwork in the early 1980s and published *In the Valley of the Nore: A Social History of Thomastown, County Kilkenny*. Both rely heavily on personal testimony, but use it to illuminate social relationships and

[13] Oral histories of the Troubles include the controversial 'Belfast Project' at Boston College, and 'The Peace Process: Layers of Meaning' based at Dundalk Institute of Technology.
[14] Archives on migration include: 'Breaking the Silence', Centre for Migration Studies, UCC; Irish Oral History Archive, London; 'Ireland House Oral History Collection', AIA NYU; 'Voices of Migration and Return', DIPPAM.

general conditions, rather than focusing upon individuals.[15] Henry Glassie's research employs the finest aspects of these trends. His monographs, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* and *The Stars of Ballymenone* unite folklore, history, and social anthropology to present a well-rounded picture of a rural Fermanagh community – the people that comprise it, the traditions that bind them together, and their ties to the wider world. These disciplinary traditions have all shaped the development of oral history in Ireland.

I. Informants & Interviews

The following section concerns my personal involvement in gathering oral histories. Awareness of the researcher's role is necessary because 'what settings are chosen for collecting, and from whom; how texts are recorded; what decisions are made about transcription, written representation, translation and publication – all these affect the final product and hence the interpretation and assessment of that text'.[16] Published oral histories sometimes attempt to erase rather than acknowledge the historian's presence and his or her role in shaping the interview, distorting the image presented and creating a false sense of objectivity (more below).[17] However, in her study of the historiographical evolution of conceptions of the interviewer / interviewee relationship from the 1970s to 1990s, Valerie Yow suggests that oral historians have largely embraced the shift from a goal of complete objectivity to recognition of subjectivity. They now speak about 'the interview as a collaborative effort, not between authority and subject but between two searchers of the past and

[15] Arensberg and Kimball write, 'the authors use the observation of personal relations, individual and group activities, expressions of sentiment and emotion of every kind, as expository matter in the presentation of the general process by which individuals are united, groups are formed, joined, opposed, and in which the cohesion of the community is created, maintained, defended, and lost.' Conrad M. Arensberg & Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*, 3rd ed. (Clasp Press, Clare, 2001), p.xxxii. Much of Silverman and Gulliver's work focused on defining social relationships within the community, including the researching of detailed genealogies. Marilyn Silverman & P.H. Gulliver, *In the Valley of the Nore: A Social History of Thomastown, County Kilkenny, 1840-1983* (Geography Publications, Dublin, 1986). A welcome complement to the trend of their text is Marilyn Silverman's chapter '"A Labouring Man's Daughter": Constructing "Respectability" in South Kilkenny', which focuses on one woman. In C. Curtin & T.M. Wilson (eds.), *Ireland from Below: Social Change and Local Communities* (Galway University Press, Officina Typographica, Galway, 1987), pp.109-27.

[16] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices* (Routledge, London & New York, 1992), p.20.

[17] Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1997), pp.12-13. One example of this is Catherine Dunne, *An Unconsidered People: The Irish in London* (New Island, Dublin, 2003).

present'.[18] A range of factors effect communication between interviewer and interviewee and the information related, including gender, age, class, ethnicity, the interviewer's need (real or perceived), and differences in ideology. Each interview is unique and it is impossible to control for a perfect conversation dynamic. Nonetheless, acknowledging subjectivity allows the researcher to understand his or her limitations and carry out a 'critical examination of the evidence with the methods of examination themselves under scrutiny'.[19]

Methods vary depending on the interviewer and purpose of the project. I utilize my own interviews as the main primary sources in this research and supplement them with sources from extant collections. This is necessary primarily in two instances: where individual subjects are no longer living and to incorporate the perspectives of migrants who listened and danced to the music but may not have played themselves. Reg Hall interviewed Irish musicians in London for his Ph.D. research and deposited his sources in the British Library. They date from the early 1990s and many were collected from people who have since passed away. They offer a wealth of information on the geography and social networks of traditional music, but the detail-oriented approach taken to the interviews resulted in less free narrative and reflection. Mick Moloney interviewed Irish musicians in America between 1974 and 1990 as part of his research in ethnomusicology and these are held in the Archives of Irish America at New York University. The same archive holds the Ireland House Oral History Collection, which includes interviews with members of the Irish community in the New York area. Brian Lawler's interviews conducted for his work on céilí bands are held at Boston College and the Irish Traditional Music Archive, Dublin, but while these include some migrant musicians they are largely too subject-specific for my research. The 'Breaking the Silence' project at the Centre for Migration Studies, University College Cork examined discourses of staying and leaving in 1950s Ireland, but the original sources are currently inaccessible to researchers. The Archive of the Irish in Britain at London Metropolitan University holds many personal narratives in oral and written form. I have found additional sources in the form of podcasts and television and radio programmes. While these are all valuable resources, many of the individual scholars focused narrowly on their

[18] Valerie Yow, '"Do I Like Them Too Much?": Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice Versa', *The Oral History Review*, vol.24, no.1 (Summer 1997), pp.69-70.
[19] Yow, '"Do I Like Them Too Much?"', p.71.

own topic of interest, minimizing possibilities for further use of the sources, unlike the broader life story approach I take (described below).

The limitations of extant sources mean I could not have carried out this research without collecting new oral histories, which will augment the archival record for future researchers. I conducted interviews with a total of forty-five individuals on forty-one separate occasions (four interviews with two people at a time).[20] Informants include traditional musicians who migrated from Ireland to the United States and Great Britain between 1945 and 1970, second-generation musicians in the same period, non-Irish people who participated in the Irish music scenes in Britain and America in the post-war era, and musicians who remained in Ireland. They are neither a definitive representative sample nor a random selection. I contacted and interviewed as many musicians from the stated demographic categories as possible and have supplemented these original sources with the archival holdings discussed above. The bibliography lists all original interviews and Appendix 1 contains short biographies of each individual. Some of their stories can be heard in the online archive, 'Voices of Irish Music & Migration' (www.musicmigration.com), which is discussed further in the final section of this chapter. I hope that the reader will recognize and value their unique voices as well as the shared threads of experience.

The Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork approved my sampling methods, informed consent procedure, and forms.[21] These also adhere to the Oral History Association's established principles and best practices.[22] I used a number of techniques to approach informants and collect interviews for this study. I found most interviewees through personal contacts because I play traditional music. This sampling technique distinguishes my work from many oral history projects because I contact the subjects specifically to request their participation; they do not volunteer themselves. I also put out a call for research assistance on the website and forum thesession.org and reached one interviewee that way and suggestions for

[20] These include interviews conducted for projects during my BA and MA degrees between 2008 and 2011: fieldwork for a class in the School of Music at UCC; my undergraduate honours thesis in Irish Studies at Boston College; and my MA thesis in Historical Research at UCC. The interviews for these projects took a broad enough narrative form that I am able to continue to utilize those conducted with individuals from demographics relevant to this Ph.D.

[21] SREC #98, approval granted 6 January 2012. My interview question guide and informed consent form are provided in Appendix 2.

[22] Oral History Association, 'Principles and Best Practices' (2009).

many others. An email sent to Comahltas Ceoltóirí Éireann requesting placement of a notice in their publication *Treoir* to reach further potential interviewees received no response. I asked interviewees to recommend others, generally based on names mentioned during the course of the conversation. All generously shared their time and stories.

Due to the chosen time period most subjects are over the age of sixty, which presents ethical and analytical challenges. The way an individual recounts his or her experiences depends on many factors including present life circumstances, the setting, and the audience. The interviewer and interviewee have an unavoidably subjective relationship and each brings an agenda or assumptions to the table. However, that does not make its product, the result of a social exchange between two parties, useless. Lambert argues, 'acknowledgement of the fact that a subjective relationship exists within interviews should not necessarily alarm historians. On the contrary, an awareness of this knowledge should have a positive effect on the discourse, and consequently the historical evidence, which is obtained through personal interviews.'[23] No historian achieves complete objectivity and appropriate recognition of the nature of the social interactions that produce oral history can be constructive. In the course of my research, I often found that being young and from outside Ireland helped elicit stories and information that the interviewees may not have thought to share with an older, established Irish scholar whom they might assume already knew.

This does not mean that I had no common ground with the interviewees: interest in traditional music and generally at least one mutual acquaintance helped create a relaxed atmosphere and starting point for discussion; we established a 'shared dialogue'.[24] I met each interviewee in a location where he or she felt comfortable, often at home or in a pub or cafe. These research procedures are recommended as best practice for conducting interviews with elderly people.[25] When the conversation takes place in a public setting it can result in poorer audio quality because of background noise, but I did not feel I could invite myself into the home of

[23] Sharon Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire, 1922-1960: Their Story* (Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancashire, UK, 2001), p.4.
[24] Ibid., p.7
[25] Susan Quine & Colette Browning, 'Methodological and Ethical Issues in Conducting Research with Older People' in M. Pitts & A. Smith (eds.), *Researching the Margins: Strategies for Ethical and Rigorous Research with Marginalised Communities* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

a person I may never have met previously, so I suggested that I visit them at home but ultimately met them wherever they chose. I began the interview by describing the nature of the project and obtained consent to record the conversation for research purposes (see Appendix 2). I asked each interviewee for permission to deposit the interview in an online archive and if they wished for any specific portion of it to remain private. I sent a copy of the audio recording on CD to all interviewees who provided a mailing address.

To structure the discussions I took a life story approach, generally beginning with a question such as 'could you tell me about where you grew up and your family?' I did not use a rigid list of questions, but gently guided the interviewee, with minimal intervention, to narrate the story of his or her life, including childhood, family, musical traditions, migration, work, migrant communities, social life, and, in some cases, return migration.[26] The narratives that emerged did not necessarily follow a strict chronological sequence as interviewees brought up topics as they came to mind. I listened actively while giving the interviewee control of the discussion to cover issues or experiences of most personal significance. The quality of the interview – the natural flow of narrative and comfort of the participants – took precedence over the collection of specific details.[27] The topics chosen and priority given to them in the construction of the life story reveal an additional layer of meaning. However, I asked questions when necessary to encourage the interviewee to elaborate. The interviews lasted from half an hour to three hours or more and often I spent an entire afternoon or evening with the interviewee. As musicians, many of the interviewees also played a few tunes that I recorded as supplementary material.

I recorded the interviews as digital audio in high-quality uncompressed stereo wave (.wav) format using an Olympus LS-10 linear PCM audio recorder with an SDHC memory card. I made a careful full transcription after each interview to ensure accuracy and consistency. Though a lengthy task, transcription is necessary for the purposes of dissemination through written documents such as this dissertation and journal articles (the final section of the chapter discusses other dissemination options). However, transcription is not a neutral process because it reduces the verbal

[26] The original interview question guide I developed is in Appendix 2.
[27] Michal McCall & Judith Wittner, 'The Good News about Life History', in H.S. Becker & M. M. McCall (eds.), *Symbolic Interaction and Cultural Studies* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990), p.73.

to a textual form.[28] Oral history handbooks devote much space to the conventions of converting spoken words to written text, but this in some ways constitutes a false goal.[29] A printed page can never perfectly represent spoken language without distortion. No attempt at reproducing in writing elements such as tone of voice, accent or dialect, and timing has the same affective impact on the audience.[30] Raphael Samuel notes in his article 'Perils of the Transcript' that 'people do not usually speak in paragraphs, and what they have to say does not usually follow an ordered sequence of comma, semi-colon, and full stop; yet very often this is the way in which their speech is reproduced.'[31] Scholars tend to impose the stylistic and grammatical conventions on the speech of the informants during transcription, or, alternately they represent dialect or accent in a way that may seem derogatory to the subjects. The original source will always be the spoken word (after all, it is called *oral* history), though the print medium necessitates textual representation.

II. Theory & Analysis

Oral history refers to the collection of original sources, as discussed above, and also their interpretation, which should question and complicate memories while still treating them with respect. Oral sources can contain both objective and subjective information; this section primarily concerns the latter and its relationship to the former. Fentress and Wickham argue,

> When we remember, we represent ourselves to ourselves and to those around us… A study of the way we remember – the way we present ourselves in our memories, the way we define our personal and collective identities through our memories, the way we order and structure our ideas in our memories, and the way we transmit these memories to others – is a study of the way we are.[32]

Studying memory itself, how it functions and its role in the creation and representation of identity, is as crucial to understanding oral histories as the factual content. A number of elements of 'the way we remember' within oral histories are

[28] Breda Gray, 'Breaking the Silence: Emigration, Gender and the Making of Irish Cultural Memory' in L. Harte (ed.), *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2007), p.128; Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, pp.47-8.
[29] I agree Alessandro Portelli that 'it is unnecessary to give excessive attention to the quest for new and closer methods of transcription. Expecting the transcript to replace the tape for scientific purposes is equivalent to doing art criticism on reproductions, or literary criticism on translations.' *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p.47.
[30] Siobhán McHugh, 'The Affective Power of Sound: Oral History on Radio', *The Oral History Review*, vol.39, no.2 (2012), pp.187-206.
[31] Raphael Samuel, 'Perils of the Transcript', *Oral History*, vol.1, no.2 (1972), p.19.
[32] James Fentress & Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1992), p.7.

essential: the construction of life stories, the nature of orality, narrative structures, modes of analysis, and the relationship between written and oral sources. The interpretive methods discussed here and employed throughout the dissertation draw on interdisciplinary perspectives, including ethnography, literary theory, anthropology, and sociology, in order to fully recognize the potential of the sources.[33]

I took a life story approach to my interviews. This is defined in terms of both object and genre; the former characterized by a narrative of the informant's life up to the present time and the latter by the social nature of the self presented in it.[34] No interview can encompass a full life story and consequently some scholars prefer alternate terminology. Folklorists use the phrases 'personal experience narrative' or 'personal experience story' to draw attention to the fractured or incomplete nature of the evidence.[35] However, even in abbreviated form life stories reveal mentalities and relationships between the individual and his or her social and historical context, moving beyond recollection of facts to the creation of meaning. They allow the teller to express and validate lived experience while recognizing that this takes place in light of current circumstances. As Charlotte Linde argues, life stories 'express our sense of self – who we are, how we are related to others, and how we became that person'.[36] The act of expression, articulation, and presentation of the self is also crucial both for the individual and for his or her audience.[37] Through life stories, historians gain not only quantifiable details or facts, but also an understanding of how the individual gives meaning to them, what is prioritized in memory, and ways in which those complex processes reflect broader mentalities.[38] Yow asks, 'is it not

[33] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p.xi. For a discussion of interdisciplinary approaches see: Ronald J. Grele, 'A Surmisable Variety: Interdisciplinarity and Oral Testimony', *American Quarterly*, vol.27, no.3 (Aug. 1975), pp.275-95.

[34] Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story', in S.B. Gluck & D. Patai (eds.), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (Routledge, London & New York, 1991), p.77.

[35] Folklorists tend to look at personal narratives in terms of the nature of expression and conventions – traditional forms, style, and imagery – rather than, as historians do, for the place of the individual in his or her social and historical context. Patrick B. Mullen, *Listening to Old Voices: Folklore, Life Stories, and the Elderly* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana & Chicago, 1992), p.4; Sandra K.D. Stahl, 'Personal Experience Stories' in R.M. Dorson (ed.), *Handbook of American Folklore* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1983), p.268; Barre Toelken, *The Dynamics of Folklore*, revised ed. (Utah State University Press, Logan, UT, 1996), p.203.

[36] Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993), p.219. See also: Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts*, p.49.

[37] Fentress & Wickham, *Social Memory*, p.201; Enda Delaney, 'Over in England', *Dublin Review of Books*, vol.10 (Summer 2009).

[38] Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation', p.90.

the meaning attributed to the facts that makes them significant or not? After all, history – or society – does not exist outside human consciousness. History is what the people who lived it make of it and what the others who observe the participants or listen to them or study their records make of it.'[39] This subjectivity seems to unnerve some historians, but treated with care it leads to far richer layers of interpretation of sources and their contexts than solely content-based analysis.

Relying on individual memories does raise questions of reliability and bias and these can be assessed in a process similar to that used for written documents. Thompson writes in *The Voice of the Past*, 'historians too easily forget that most people are less interested in calendar years than themselves, and do not arrange their memories with dates as markers'.[40] Someone telling their life story may err in recalling dates and the way they remember historical events ties intimately to their own experiences at the time. Having taken this into account and checked factual credibility, Portelli argues that,

> There are no 'false' oral sources… The diversity of oral history lies in the fact that 'untrue' statements are still psychologically 'true', and that these previous errors sometimes reveal more than factually accurate accounts… The credibility of oral sources is a different credibility… The importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts but rather in its divergence from them, where imagination, symbolism, desire break in.[41]

Eugene Hynes applies this reasoning to his discussion of a nineteenth-century memoir, suggesting that factual error, such as the subject incorrectly recalling his own age, is not proof of a bad or inaccurate memory and instead indicates the little importance attached to exact age and birthdays. These mistakes, 'rather than being grounds for dismissing his memoir as unreliable, become crucial clues themselves,' offering insights into the values of an era and society.[42]

Positivist questioning of facts often overshadows discussion of the nature and function of memory itself, though reliance on it is what sets oral history apart.[43] In her book *Women of the House*, Caitríona Clear reflects on collecting oral histories and her realization that 'people's memories of personal experience are coloured by

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[39] Valerie Raleigh Yow, quoted in Kenneth R. Kirby, 'Phenomenology and the Problems of Oral History', *Oral History Review*, vol.35, no.1 (2008), p.23.
[40] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.157.
[41] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p.51.
[42] Eugene Hynes, 'Making Sense of "Mistakes" in Oral Sources', in N. Cronin, S. Crosson & J. Eastlake (eds.), *Anáil an Bhéil Bheo: Orality and Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), p.152.
[43] Fentress & Wickham, *Social Memory*, p.2.

their own priorities and values – that opinions as well as facts are inscribed in memory, influencing what is remembered and what is forgotten.'[44] Memory and remembering are active processes connecting past and present. Breda Gray writes, 'memories… cannot correspond with some actual past, but a past that is constructed through subsequent personal experience and present concerns.'[45] The idea of the *construction* of memory is crucial: omissions become part of the story and the historian can uncover these silences and try to understand their origin and function. Construction also implies on-going development. In the case of interpreting historical documents, the historian needs awareness of changes in prevailing social and cultural values since the time of writing. In the case of oral histories, the narrators have also experienced a change in perspective since the time they recall.[46] For example, many interviewees for this research are returned migrants, some happy with their situation and others less so, and this present state of mind influences what they say about their experiences of emigration and the years spent abroad (see Chapter 2, section III). Nostalgia, or a tendency to minimize hardships of the past, can also pose problems. This need not detract from the value of the sources, but must be taken into account in their interpretation.[47]

Even where personal narratives do not diverge from historical fact, perhaps their greatest attribute for social history lies in meaning they add. For most people, political debates or wars matter far less than their influence on everyday realities. Playwright Brian Friel, in his introduction to Charles McGlinchey's memoir, *The Last of the Name*, writes of this tendency within life histories:

> The historian or sociologist can arbitrarily choose almost any period in the history of a society and demonstrate that at that particular time significant changes took place in the life of a people. If the chosen period were McGlinchey's life – 1861-1954 – attention would rightly focus on issues like Home Rule and the land wars, the rise and fall of Parnell, the Rising in 1916, two world wars, the atomic bomb. McGlinchey does not mention even one of these events. They are overlooked in a manner that is almost Olympian. They do not merit his notice.[48]

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[44] Caitriona Clear, *Women of the House: Women's Household Work in Ireland 1922-1961* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2000), p.1.
[45] Breda Gray, '"Breaking the Silence": Questions of Staying and Going in 1950s Ireland', *Irish Journal of Psychology*, vol.23, nos.3-4 (2002), p.166. See also Fentress & Wickham, *Social Memory*, p.24, p.40.
[46] Kirby, 'Phenomenology and the Problems of Oral History', p.30.
[47] Raphael Samuel & Paul Thompson, *The Myths We Live By* (Routledge, London & New York, 1990), pp.8-9.
[48] Brian Friel, 'Important Places', introduction to Charles McGlinchey, as told to Patrick Kavanagh, *The Last of the Name* (Collins Press, Cork, 2007), p.1.

This is not to say the vast political, economic, and technological changes had no effect on McGlinchey or his community, but in his memoir evidence exists only in the personal and local ways he experienced them. In terms of post-Second World War migration, demographic and economic statistics can tell us the number of people who left Ireland, the jobs they held, and how much money they sent home, but those things will never reveal *what it felt like* for a young man from rural Ballyduff, Co. Kerry whose home and school had no electricity or running water to get on a train for the first time as he left for London in 1964 and to have to navigate the Underground there as soon as he arrived.[49] Likewise, political documents reveal only the attitudes of a small, elite sector of society and in Ireland those who rationalized emigration and the social and economic forces driving it were not those whom it directly affected.[50] Few interviewees in this study mentioned politics, perhaps because in many respects it operated at a level far removed from their everyday lives. Both perspectives validly express a relationship to the same society and era, but as William Cronon writes in the foreword to *Remembering Ahanagran*, history and memory have 'different truths' and each can inform the other.[51]

Not only do the present time and priorities of the narrator shape his or her story of the past; so too does the social context. The interview itself is a social interaction, 'an *experience* before it becomes a *text*'.[52] Thompson calls it a 'mutual process': an intersection and negotiation of the interests and agendas of interviewer and interviewee.[53] What results is not wholly 'new', but reflects stories told and retold over time, though the form and words chosen may differ on each occasion.[54] Even prior to the point of verbal recollection, memories are created socially and the historical memory of a community (such as a nation or ethnic group) can exert a powerful influence on its members. Elizabeth Tonkin writes, 'the memories with which people interpret the present and go on to make the future are also social in that

[49] Packie Browne, interview with the author, 6 Nov. 2010.
[50] J.J. Lee provides an overview of political attitudes towards emigration in the post-Second World War era and their detachment from the reality most ordinary people experienced. *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1989), pp.375-87.
[51] William Cronon, Foreword to Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagran: Storytelling in a Family's Past* (Hill and Wang, New York, 1998), p.x.
[52] Emphasis in original. Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia*, p.xiii.
[53] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.157; Mary Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women: An Oral History* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin & Portland, OR, 2007), p.6; Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia*, p.10.
[54] Samuel Schrager, 'What Is Social in Oral History?', *International Journal of Oral History*, vol.4, no.2 (June 1983), pp.76-98.

we recall social relationships, and scenes experienced along with other people; so that memories are less individual than is commonly supposed in a culture of individualism.'[55] Individual and collective memories work in dialectic fashion, because the latter is not located in some abstract site, but in individuals and their expressions of historical consciousness.[56] For example, recollections from Irishmen who worked in the construction industry in post-Second World War Britain show evidence of internalization of aspects of the character of the navvy dating back to at least the nineteenth century with emphasis on a hard-working, transient, and independent lifestyle.[57] These types of stories emerge from a 'continual mutual exchange' between 'publicly offered myth' and 'individual experience' and a process of selection.[58]

The 'texts' created in a life story interview have both similarities to and differences from written autobiographies and memoirs, which I also utilize. Both take narrative form, but their interpretation requires consideration of issues of agency, literacy, and production.[59] Writing about one's life represents an active choice – a decision that the life recalled is worth retelling – and often in the background is an assumed level of literacy. Everyone has a life story; only a select few produce and publish autobiographies. Oral histories, on the other hand, are 'elicited rather than self-initiated' and contexts of telling play a significant role in the 'text' created.[60] The interviewer asks the first question, initiating the narrative and taking an influential role in shaping it, though some publications elide this role.[61] A few autobiographies fall into a grey area between the oral and written: they are based on oral testimony and 'ghost-written' into a structured narrative by the interviewer, often with little or no description of that process, which further complicates their interpretation.[62]

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[55] Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992), p.12.
[56] Susan A. Crane, 'Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory', *American Historical Review*, vol.102, no.5 (Dec. 1997), pp.1372-85.
[57] Sara Goek, '"I Never Would Return Again to Plough the Rocks of Bawn": Irishmen in Post-Second World War Britain' in D. Convery (ed.), *Locked Out: A Century of Irish Working-Class Life* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2013), pp.157-74.
[58] Samuel & Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, p.15.
[59] Gray, 'Breaking the Silence: Emigration', p.126.
[60] Ibid., p.128.
[61] Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia*, p.9.
[62] Examples of this include Packie Manus Byrne (with Stephen Jones), *Recollections of a Donegal Man* (Roger Millington, Lampeter, Wales, 1989) and McGlinchey, *The Last of the Name*.

In relation to migrants' autobiographical works, Delaney critiques Harte's selection of sources in *The Literature of the Irish in Britain: Autobiography and Memoir, 1725-2001* for a failure to recognize oral testimony as another approach 'to recovering the lived experience of the Irish in Britain… Certainly these [oral histories] could not qualify as literature in any sense, though their raw nature can serve as a counterweight to the stylised autobiographies that Harte has analyzed with such care.'[63] While Irish migrants as a whole tended to be working-class, autobiographies predominantly come from those 'who deemed themselves worthy of a place in history', whether creative writers, activists, or politicians.[64] Canavan argues that the few existing Irish migrant labourers' autobiographies fall closer to the oral storytelling tradition than their counterparts in the literary autobiographical canon because they are generally an 'immediate expression of individual experience' rather than highly crafted works.[65] As Delaney suggests, literary and oral forms can complement one another, both recognized as part of the life story genre and contributing to understanding the Irish migrant experience in different contexts and styles.

Oral histories offer access to material, factual and experiential, that often fails to enter the written record. In the middle of a long interview with Sligo flute player and London resident Tommy Healy, Reg Hall, the interviewer, suddenly paused and asked:

> REG: No one's ever written this down, have they? You've never seen any of this stuff in writing, have you?
>
> TOMMY: I haven't.
>
> REG: It's all lost isn't it, if we don't get it.
>
> TOMMY: The only one that comes up with anything like that, real down-to-earth of the things that did happen is that Mac Amhlaigh, isn't it? Dónall Mac Amhlaigh. It's a Gaelic name.
>
> REG: Where does he write?
>
> TOMMY: He's a Galway man. I think he writes in Ireland, I'm not sure, but he's been over here. He's been in the Black Cap and the Bedford and the [*unintelligible*] and the Galway club, all that type of thing. Pulling electric cable for Murphy.[66]

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[63] Delaney, 'Over in England'.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Bernard Canavan, 'Story-tellers and Writers: Irish Identity in Emigrant Labourers' Autobiographies, 1870-1970', in P. O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History, Heritage, Identity*, vol.3, *The Creative Migrant* (Leicester University Press, London, 1994), pp.154-5.
[66] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh was born in Galway in 1924 and migrated to England in 1951, where he lived for the remainder of his life, writing and working in the construction industry. Tommy Healy, interview with Reg Hall (part two), 28 October 1987, RH BL.

The man in question, Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, wrote the best-known account of an Irish worker in post-Second World War England, *Dialann Deoraí*, translated into English as *An Irish Navvy*. He also wrote for a number of newspapers in Britain and Ireland including *The Irish Post*, *Ireland's Own*, *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Press*, and *The Irish Democrat* as well as fiction loosely based on his experiences.

Mac Amhlaigh himself expressed much the same sentiments as Reg Hall and Tommy Healy:

> The people at home have written so many stories and novels about the perception of life in Ireland, and the Irish Americans have done the same, but scarcely a thing as come from us, the Irish in Britain… All those thousands and thousands of Irish who came here, and went through the experience of adjusting to a new country and the trauma of settling into a new way of life with different values and all that, have written scarcely a thing about it.[67]

While Harte's collection of autobiographies and memoirs showcases what has appeared in writing, Delaney and Mac Amhlaigh both suggest much remains absent from the print record. Not only have the Irish in Britain produced relatively few of their own writings (compared to their counterparts in Ireland and America), but Mac Amhlaigh also accuses historians of an inability or failure to recognize the diversity of experiences: 'Historians have written books about the Irish in Britain without ever really knowing the Irish immigrant labouring class. They can quote you the number of people who came to Skipton Hiring Fair, but they can't tell you what those workers felt and what they thought.'[68] This is evidenced by the relatively brief mentions afforded to Mac Amhlaigh's own works in many scholarly publications dealing with the post-war migrant experience.[69] However, in recent years more

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[67] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh in Nigel Gray (ed.), *Writers Talking* (Caliban Books, London, 1989), pp.180-1.

[68] Skipton in Yorkshire had a hiring fair frequented by Irish seasonal agricultural labourers. Dónall Mac Amhlaigh in Nigel Gray (ed.), *Writers Talking* (Caliban Books, London, 1989), p.184.

[69] Passing references to Mac Amhlaigh's writings are limited to a few paragraphs in, for example: R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (Penguin Books, London, 1995), pp.xii-xiii; and Patrick Ward, *Exile, Emigration and Irish Writing* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin & Portland, OR, 2002), p.242. This signifies a broader problem in Irish historiography: the failure to engage with Irish language sources, because those references that do exist are generally only to *An Irish Navvy* or other pieces Mac Amhlaigh wrote in English, not to his many works in Irish that remain untranslated. Clair Wills recent work, *The Best Are Leaving*, engages more significantly with *An Irish Navvy*, but in English. The only serious assessments of the whole body of his work come from Irish-language scholars and are generally written in Irish, which again most historians fail to engage with: Máirín Nic Eoin, '*An Scríbhneoir agus an Imirce Éigeantach: Scrúdú ar Shaothar Cruthaitheach Dhónaill Mac Amhlaigh*', *Oghma*, vol.2 (1990), pp.92-104; Máirín Nic Eoin, '*Polaitíocht na nOibrithe agus na nImircoirí: Saothar Iriseoreachta Dhónall Mhic Amhlaigh*', *Scáthán* (1991), pp.20-5; Aisling Ní Dhonnchadha & Máirín Nic Eoin (eds.), *Ar an gCoigríoch: Díolaim Litríochta ar Scéal na hImirce* (Indreabhán, Conamara, Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2008).

historians have recognized that oral sources can remedy the imbalance within the documentary record, including Ultan Cowley, Sharon Lambert, Sarah O'Brien, and Seán Sorohan. My research continues forward on that path.[70]

It is a path with bends and steep ascents. Daniel James writes of the 'complex and problematic' relationship between personal narratives and history, the insights available, and the potential difficulties of reaching them:

> If oral testimony is indeed a window onto the subjective in history – the cultural, social, and ideological universe of historical actors – then it must be said that the view it affords is not a transparent one that simply reflects thoughts, feelings as they really were/are. At the very least the image is bent, the glass of the window unclear… Life stories are cultural constructs that draw on a public discourse structured by class and gender conventions. They also make use of a wide spectrum of possible roles, self-representations, and available narratives. As such, we have to learn to read these stories and the symbols and logic embedded in them if we are to attend to their deeper meaning and do justice to the complexity found in the lives and historical experiences of those who recount them.[71]

The historian must discern if the window that oral history offers onto the past is coloured, fractured, or cloudy, in what way and to what degree. The window itself – in this case signifying issues of class, gender, self-representation, and symbolism – can distort the view of what lies on the other side. If scholars examine oral histories closely and 'read' them in a way that respects their form, then those distortions can be taken into account.

III. Dissemination & Digital Methods

Oral history, unlike many other types of historical research, involves the creation of original sources and the researcher should consider not only his or her individual use, but also long-term preservation and dissemination. Doug Boyd writes, 'we work hard to interview narrators, document communities, and preserve oral histories because we want individual stories to, eventually, connect to the historical record and contribute to a larger social, cultural, and human understanding'.[72] Depending on the subject matter and type of project this connection

[70] Ultan Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain: A History of the Irish Navvy* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2001); Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*; O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity in Post-War Birmingham'; Sean Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles* (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2012).
[71] Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life, History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2000), p.124.
[72] Doug Boyd, 'Search, Explore, Connect: Disseminating Oral History in the Digital Age' in D. Boyd, S. Cohen, B. Rakerd, & D. Rehberger (eds.), *Oral History in the Digital Age* (Institute of Museum

may not happen immediately, but many options exist: publication of print materials (research papers, books, or transcripts), deposition of the sources in a trusted repository, creation of a digital archive or project, documentary radio programmes or podcasts, physical or digital exhibitions, and artistic endeavours. While oral histories have 'characteristically been seen as "raw" documentation, almost impossible to search or navigate analytically' unless they are 'cooked', new technologies have enhanced the potential for locating and disseminating audio sources in forms that are both 'raw' and user-friendly.[73] This section evaluates various options and their application to my research.

As discussed above, transcription and textual representation of oral history tends to dominate the field, despite the obvious disconnect from the original source. Historians still privilege print publications, whether books or scholarly articles. Text suits the presentation of research because research itself is an act of interpretation, but print is less ideal for providing access to original sources. Works that fall somewhere between the categories of primary and secondary sources are the most problematic. For example, Catherine Dunne's book, *An Unconsidered People: The Irish in London* presents ten edited transcripts of interviews with only a short introduction by the author whose name appears on the cover. Not only does she take ownership of the stories in this way, she also fails to describe her editorial decisions. In response to an email enquiry she replied that the stories presented 'are very close indeed to the original interviews', then contradicted that statement by saying she 'rearrange[d] the material from time to time as people did not tell their stories – naturally enough – in a completely linear fashion. They would often move back and forth in time as a new memory was sparked. I also edited out repetitions and hesitations for a cleaner text for the reader.'[74] In other words, the stories presented come 'close' to the originals in terms of content, but she has rendered them in a literary form. Other publications make efforts to delineate the process of creation, but leave us with the question of whether the results are primary or secondary

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and Library Services, Washington DC, 2012) (accessed Jan. 2013) <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/search-explore-connect/>.

[73] Michael Frisch, 'Oral History and the Digital Revolution: Toward a Post-Documentary Sensibility', in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, London & New York, 2006), p.111, 113.

[74] Catherine Dunne, email to the author, 22 Feb. 2011.

sources or stuck in limbo between the two.[75] Though the printed word may suit the presentation of research using oral sources with appropriate acknowledgment of the process of interpretation (as this dissertation aims to do), examples such as Dunne's book demonstrate its limitations for disseminating primary sources in a manner that respects their unique nature.[76]

Other options are friendlier to the inherent orality of the sources, including radio and its digital counterpart, the podcast. This medium offers two key benefits: 'the capacity to convey the oral/aural nature of oral history and the ability to reach a potentially much wider audience that the rather self-selecting field of, for example, readers of books or visitors to museums'.[77] The listener hears not only *what* was said, but also *how* it was said and the individual voice behind the story, which has a greater affective impact. At the same time, it also allows the programme creator to add historical contextualization. Stephen Smith produces radio documentaries on American history and writes that 'radio is especially well suited to telling the quieter, less well-known stories behind historical events – stories that complicate our understanding of what we think we know'.[78] In his case, these stories include conscientious objectors to military service during the Second World War and life under Jim Crow segregation laws in the American south, experiences that remained largely unspoken for decades. Smith argues that these 'voices of the past' can have an important place in social memory, developing our understanding of contemporary life.[79] Like publication of edited transcripts or research based on oral histories, producing a radio documentary or podcast involves an act of interpretation, of selection and sequencing.[80] The oral/aural medium brings it closer to the authentic source, but may simultaneously obscure the process of alteration. Some programmes, for example, neglect to mention the names of the speakers or the capacity in which

[75] For example, the introduction of Mary Lennon, Marie McAdam, and Joanne O'Brien's book *Across the Water: Irish Women's Lives in Britain*, describes the interview process, questions asked, processes of transcription, and editorial decisions. (Virago Press, London, 1988), pp.9-18.
[76] While it is impossible to embed audio in a printed text, some journals, including the *Oral History Review* published by Oxford University Press, have begun to allow authors to include supplementary audio material with the online versions of their articles.
[77] McHugh, 'The Affective Power of Sound', p.187.
[78] Stephen Smith, 'Living History', in J. Biewen & A. Dilworth (eds.), *Reality Radio: Telling True Stories in Sound* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2010), p.142.
[79] Ibid., p.146.
[80] Charles Hardy III, 'Adventures in Sound: Aural History, the Digital Revolution, and the Making of "'I Can Almost See the Lights of Home': A Field Trip to Harlan County, Kentucky', in D.A. Boyd & M.A. Larson (eds.), *Oral History and Digital Humanities: Voice, Access, and Engagement* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014), pp.64-5.

they speak, leaving much up to guesswork.[81] A montage of multiple voices can tell a broad narrative, but it obviates individual experiences. Thus, as an interpretive medium for public consumption of oral histories radio can be highly effective in providing a connection between past and present for the listener, but as a research product it has other limitations.

Non-textual dissemination of oral histories is crucial to a full appreciation of them because 'the affective power of sound and voice, combined with the intimacy of the listening process, means we can be moved by listening to oral history; this, in turn, affects how we absorb and retain its content, as well as how we judge that content.'[82] Preservation and presentation of the sources in their original form serves this purpose. Raphael Samuel wrote in 1972 that 'the collector of the spoken word' has a unique and 'privileged position':

> He [sic] is the creator, in some sort, of his own archives, and he ought to interpret his duties accordingly. His role, properly conceived, is that of archivist, as well as historian, retrieving and storing priceless information which would otherwise be lost… However intelligent and well thought out his work, it is inconceivable that his will be the only selection of text that could be made. The information which he brushes aside as irrelevant may be just the thing upon which a future researcher will seize – if he is given the chance. Research can never be a once-and-for-all affair, nor is there ever a single use to which evidence can be put. Historians in the future will bring fresh interests to bear upon the materials we collect; they will be asking different questions and seeking different answers. And the more successful we are in executing our own research tasks, the more likely it is that their work will diverge from our own. Unless recordings can be preserved in their original integrity, and made freely available for other researchers to consult, they will remain locked forever in the preoccupations of the collector, immune to criticism, and incapable of serving as a base for a continuing enquiry.[83]

The original impetus for the interview may serve the purposes of a particular inquiry, but if it remains accessible it could have innumerable uses in future. In Samuel's time this meant depositing analogue recordings in a physical archive, a procedure still important today for preservation, but digital archives now further enhance possibilities for access.[84] Long before the concept of an open online archive available

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[81] One example of this is *Lashings of Music*, a biographical programme produced for RTÉ about uilleann piper Willie Clancy, who spent a few years in London in the mid-1950s. His acquaintances speak about his life and contexts in which they knew him, but most are not named themselves.
[82] McHugh, 'The Affective Power of Sound', p.195.
[83] Samuel, 'Perils of the Transcript', p.22.
[84] Analog recordings in physical archives remain underutilized. Douglas A. Boyd, '"I Just Want to Click on It to Listen": Oral History Archives, Orality, and Usability', in D.A. Boyd & M.A. Larson (eds.), *Oral History and Digital Humanities*, p.78; Michael Frisch, 'Oral History and the Digital Revolution', p.102.

anywhere in the world, Samuel recognized the importance of access as well as preservation in his message. Oral history cannot democratize the historical record if the voices recorded remain muted in storage boxes.

This intent also underpins the digital humanities.[85] While digital humanists have a tendency to wax lyrical about how technology can save the humanities, sometimes overstating the case, it does have significant implications for the democratization of knowledge.[86] Cohen and Rosenzweig write in their book *Digital History*, 'online accessibility means… that the documentary record of the past is open to people who rarely had entree before.'[87] The only requirement is a device with internet access, though a digital divide of haves and have-nots persists.[88] Accessibility can lead to the validation of experience, furthering the idea of cultural equity that music collector Alan Lomax developed. He recalled his early years of fieldwork, saying, 'when you could play this material back to people they realized that they, their stuff, were just as good as anybody else'.[89] If we are to unite the principles of oral history and digital humanities, the question then becomes *how do we make our sources accessible* and in what form? Audio used to be unwieldy; it involved too much rewinding and fast-forwarding. Now, the digital medium makes any part a recording instantly accessible.[90] However, paradoxically, technology has reinforced text-based conventions, because search-engines look for text and many online oral history archives provide transcripts rather than focusing on new, dynamic, and interactive means for presenting audio-visual material.[91]

Unresolved issues remain: access and digitization of audio is not enough on its own. It needs to be discoverable and navigable and to give users the potential to

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[85] Dean Rehberger, '[o]ral [h]istory and the [d]igital [h]umanities', in D.A. Boyd & M.A. Larson, *Oral History and Digital Humanities*, p.192.
[86] Lisa Spiro names 'openness' as one of the key values of the digital humanities. '"This Is Why We Fight": Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities', in M.K. Gold (ed.), *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2012), p.24.
[87] Daniel J. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, 2005) [accessed Dec. 2011] <http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/introduction/>.
[88] Nick Sacco, 'Does Digital Technology Encourage Data Democratization?', 16 April 2013 (accessed June 2014) <http://pastexplore.wordpress.com/2013/04/16/does-digital-technology-encourage-data-democratization/>.
[89] Alan Lomax, interview with Charles Kuralt (part 2), 1991 (accessed Dec. 2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbOnsIptqDc>.
[90] Frisch, 'Oral History and the Digital Revolution', p.103.
[91] Michael Frisch, 'Three Dimensions and More: Oral History Beyond the Paradoxes of Method', in S. Hesse-Bibe & P. Leavy (eds.), *The Handbook of Emergent Methods* (Guilford Publications, New York, 2010), pp.221-40.

make connections between resources while still maintaining the essential qualities of oral history. Digitization alone does not justify a whole field of academic study. Access involves more than simply depositing materials on a website and it requires archives to change their focus away from sole concentration on preservation. The true potential of technology in the humanities stems from its ability to highlight relationships between sources in a way that explodes the linear limitations of print. As Randy Bass predicted in 1996, 'the real power of these materials will not come from sheer access to primary resources, but the connections that can be made across them and the visibility of the process of the work being done on them'.[92] Though some exemplary projects have taken steps in this direction, nearly two decades later many digital resources still fail to fully engage with these possibilities. The potential of the digital medium for the humanities, and for oral history, is still evolving.

I have taken these objectives into account in building my digital archive, 'Voices of Irish Music & Migration' (www.musicmigration.com; image 1.1). It presents a selection of twelve interviews, those that I had permission to disseminate online and had the best audio quality. The intended audience includes researchers in

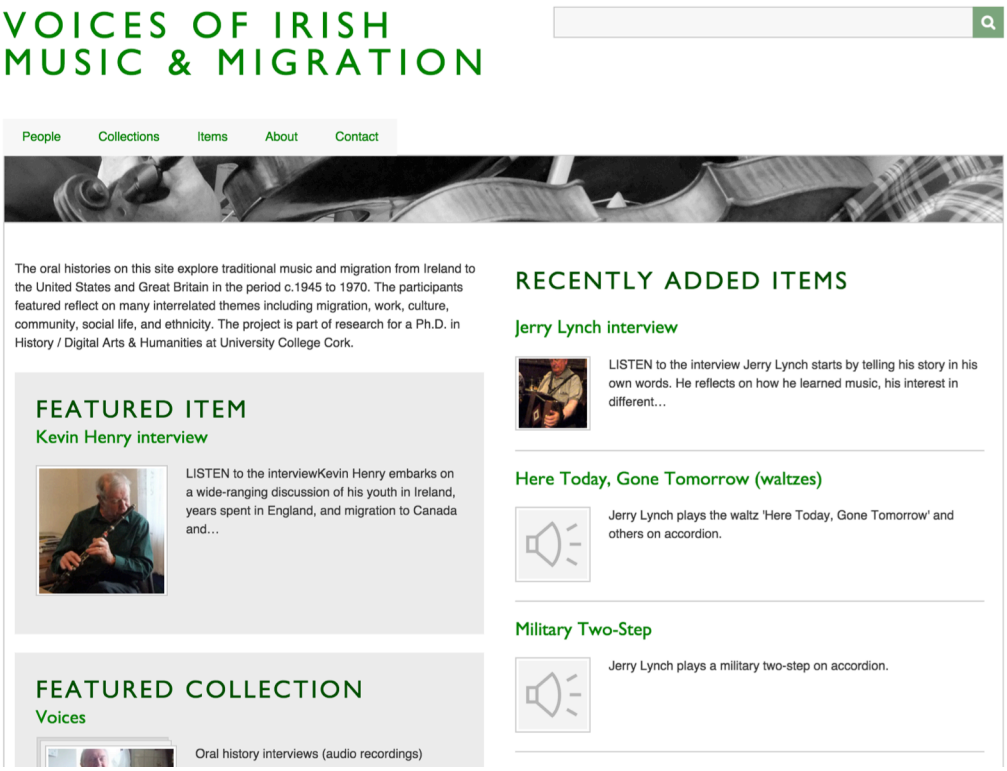


Image 1.1: Screen capture of the 'Voices of Irish Music & Migration' homepage (17 April 2015)

[92] Quoted in Debra De Ruyver & Jennifer Evans, 'Digital Junction', *American Quarterly*, vol.58, no.3 (Sept. 2006), p.943.

a variety of disciplines, students and teachers (at second and third level), traditional musicians, Irish communities across the diaspora, and the general public. While many of the best and most innovative projects that unite oral history and digital humanities emerge from institutions or multi-institutional collaborations with considerable funding and technical resources, I have faced the challenge of balancing more restrictive project parameters (one person with limited resources and less than four years to completion) with methods that uphold the same principles. I decided to use two free, open-source, web-based programmes: the content management system Omeka and the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS).

Omeka is a web-publishing platform developed by the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. It is aimed at libraries, archives, educational institutions, and the cultural heritage sector and provides a clean and easy-to-use web-based interface for an underlying MySQL database. The main unit in Omeka is an item (in my case this is an interview, photograph, or recording of a tune) and descriptive metadata is added for each item in the database. Items can also be added to 'collections', which I have chosen to use for different types of content: Voices (oral history interviews), Photographs, and Music (recordings of tunes and songs). 'Exhibits' allow space to unite media with textual explanatory content, as I have done under the 'People' heading, which contains images and short biographical sketches of the individuals whose interviews feature on the site. A freestanding 'about' page provides descriptive textual information and a 'contact' page allows visitors to the site to email me. These levels of access allow users to choose to interact with the material in linear or non-linear form; they can move between related items or listen to an interview from start to finish. The diagram below (figure 1.1) shows the basic organization of an Omeka digital archive.

Each item has associated descriptive textual metadata (data about data), which enhances its discovery and use. Metadata works most effectively when it adheres to international standards for consistency and interoperability.[93] Omeka uses Dublin Core standards, a set of fifteen elements that provide information about the items. This is flexible enough to accommodate all types of sources and materials, but

[93] Elinor A. Mazé, 'Metadata: Best Practices for Oral History Access and Preservation', in Boyd et al. (eds.), *Oral History in the Digital Age*; Doug Boyd, Danielle Gabbard, Sara Price & Alana Boltz, 'Indexing Interviews in OHMS: An Overview', in Boyd et al. (eds.), *Oral History in the Digital Age*.

standardized fields mean that data could be easily shared or transferred between systems. Entering text in the metadata fields makes the resources searchable. Mazé writes that the responsibility of the 'metadata practitioner' is 'to enrich our collections with pointers and descriptors of many sorts to bring interviews in all their formats to the attention of every user we can imagine, and to remain constantly vigilant for new points of view, new nuances of meaning and implication, and new uses of the stories we care for.'[94] We use metadata not only to capture the context of the object – the names of interviewer and interviewee, date, etc. – but also to 'do it in a regular and meaningful way so it can be processed both by machines and humans'.[95] The table below shows the definition of each Dublin Core field and an example of how I have adapted it to my oral history interviews based on existing guidelines (not all fields are visible on the public interface of the website).[96]

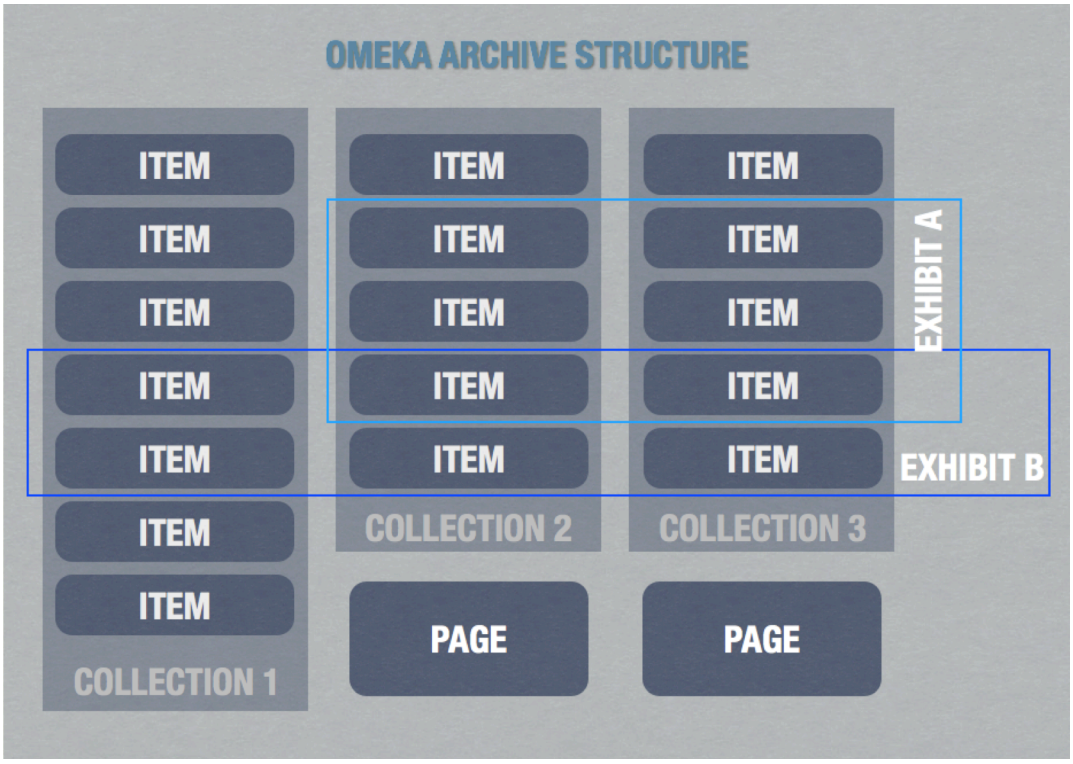


Figure 1.1: diagram created by Sara Goek.

[94] Elinor Mazé, 'Deconstruction without Destruction: Creating Metadata for Oral History in a Digital World', in D.A. Boyd & M.A. Larson (eds.), *Oral History and Digital Humanities*, p.155.
[95] Rehberger, '[o]ral [h]istory and the [d]igital [h]umanities', p.193.
[96] International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, 'Descriptive Metadata – Application Profiles, Dublin Core (DC)' (accessed Oct. 2014) <http://www.iasa-web.org/tc04/descriptive-metadata-application-profiles-dublin-core-dc>; Ball State University Libraries, 'Oral Histories: Metadata' (accessed Dec. 2012) <http://www.bsu.edu/libraries/wiki/index.php?title=Oral_Histories#Metadata>; Mike Casey & Bruce Gordon, *Sound Directions: Best Practices for Audio Preservation* (Indiana University, Bloomington, 2007).

Table 1.1: Dublin Core Metadata		
Field	**Description**	**Example**
Title	Title of the item.	Danny Meehan Interview
Subject	Library of Congress Subject Headings (controlled vocabulary).	Oral history Ireland--History Ireland--Emigration and Immigration
Description	Textual description of the item. For an oral history interview this includes a summary of the topics covered and biographical details. I have also used this field to provide a hyperlink to the interview audio and index (OHMS viewer).	LISTEN to the interview Danny Meehan (b.1940) reflects on his life from his childhood in Drimalost, Co. Donegal, to his migration to England at age sixteen, and his return fifty years later. He speaks about his musical influences, the musicians he heard and played with, and many musical nights in the pubs and folk clubs of London.
Creator	Names of interviewee and interviewer.	Meehan, Danny Goek, Sara
Source	A related resource from which this item is derived. In the case of an interview excerpt, this is the title for the full interview.	Danny Meehan interview with Sara Goek, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal, 11 June 2012
Publisher	Name of publisher of item, if it was published.	N/A
Date	Date of resource creation. Format yyyy-mm-dd if possible, or c.yyyy if only an approximate date is known.	2012-06-11
Contributor	Name individual who contributed or provided the item.	Goek, Sara
Rights	Copyright held by creator(s) in year of creation.	Copyright 2012 Sara Goek & Danny Meehan.
Relation	Collection name and archive name of which this resource forms a part.	N/A
Format	Physical medium or digital file format of the item described using controlled vocabulary of Internet Media Types (MIME).	audio/mpeg
Language	Language of the resource, using	en

	controlled vocabulary RFC4646.	
Type	Existing item types in Omeka: document, moving image, oral history, sound, still image, website, event, email, lesson plan, hyperlink, person, interactive resource. No additional item types will be required.	Oral history
Identifier	Unique accession number of the resource.	N/A
Coverage	Place or relevant time period. Use only when relevant or applicable.	Co. Donegal, Ireland London, UK
Item Type Metadata: Oral history		
Interviewer	Person conducting the interview.	Sara Goek
Interviewee	The person(s) being interviewed.	Danny Meehan
Location	Location of the interview.	Donegal Town, Co. Donegal
Transcription	Written text transcribed from the recording. This field is not used, except in the case of songs, where lyrics are provided.	N/A
Original Format	Physical or digital format of original recording.	audio/wav
Duration	Length of the recording.	40:15
Bit rate/ frequency	Bit rate, an indicator of audio quality. This applies to the online version of the audio, not the original.	96 kbps
Time Summary	Summary based on different time stamps throughout the recording.	N/A

When it comes to audio-visual materials, Omeka has limitations on its own. If an hour-long interview is added as a single item, even with full descriptive metadata a user could not easily find the part of the interview he or she is most interested in. I used one possible workaround for the digital project that students in my undergraduate oral history classes contributed to in 2013 and 2014: they broke interviews into segments of five to ten minutes and added each segment as a separate item, with accompanying descriptive metadata and tags relating to the subject

matter.[97] This works passably well, but it remains difficult to find information within an interview part or to see the overall structure of the interview. Incorporating the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer, as I have done for this project, offsets some of Omeka's limitations by uniting the audio recordings with easily navigable and searchable text. Doug Boyd and the Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky developed OHMS specifically for the purpose of connecting audio/video recordings to transcriptions and indexes.[98] It did not yet exist when I began my Ph.D. in 2011. Boyd writes that 'oral history contains a massive amount of information that can prove cumbersome to navigate, yet to the researcher, it is the individual moments in an oral history interview that matter. OHMS empowers online users of oral history to search, explore, and connect to those moments on a large scale, effectively and affordably.'[99] To fulfil this purpose, I decided to use indexes (rather than full transcripts), to encourage users to listen to the original source. Michael Frisch writes, 'the idea basic to indexing from the beginning – that it can include anything worth noting, from explicit nominal references to broader umbrella ideas to abstract themes – is more responsive to a user's or researcher's approach to analysis, in which particular avenues of inquiry not reducible to content alone can be the basis of cross-sectional searching and navigation.'[100] Indexing mediates between the need for discoverability via text and the inherent orality of the material.

OHMS has two parts: the application, where the work of indexing and synchronizing takes place, and the viewer, which displays the final product (see images 1.2 and 1.3 below). The former is hosted by the developers and accessed via a personal account, while the latter is installed on my website's server. When a user visits the page for an interview item in the Omeka interface of the site, he or she can click on a hyperlink to see the synchronized audio and index in the OHMS viewer. Users can choose to listen to the interview from start to finish, to search the index by keyword, or to use the headings and summaries to navigate. However, this does create some limitations because adding entire interviews as single items to Omeka

[97] *Oral History @UCC*, <http://www.oralhistoryucc.com>.
[98] Doug Boyd, 'OHMS: Enhancing Access to Oral History for Free', *Oral History Review*, vol.40, no.1 (Winter-Spring 2013), pp.95-106. Examples of institutional projects that have adopted this technology (as of April 2015) include the *Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations* project at the Brooklyn Historical Society <http://cbbg.brooklynhistory.org/> and *Goin' North: Stories from the First Great Migration to Philadelphia* at Chester University <http://www.goinnorth.org/>.
[99] Boyd, '"I Just Want to Click on It to Listen"', p.92.
[100] Frisch, 'Oral History and the Digital Revolution', p.107.

makes subject tags practically useless without the ability to tag particular interview segments, which unfortunately is not possible at this time in either Omeka or OHMS. I hope both systems continue to develop and as they do, I will be able to revise and improve the digital archive.

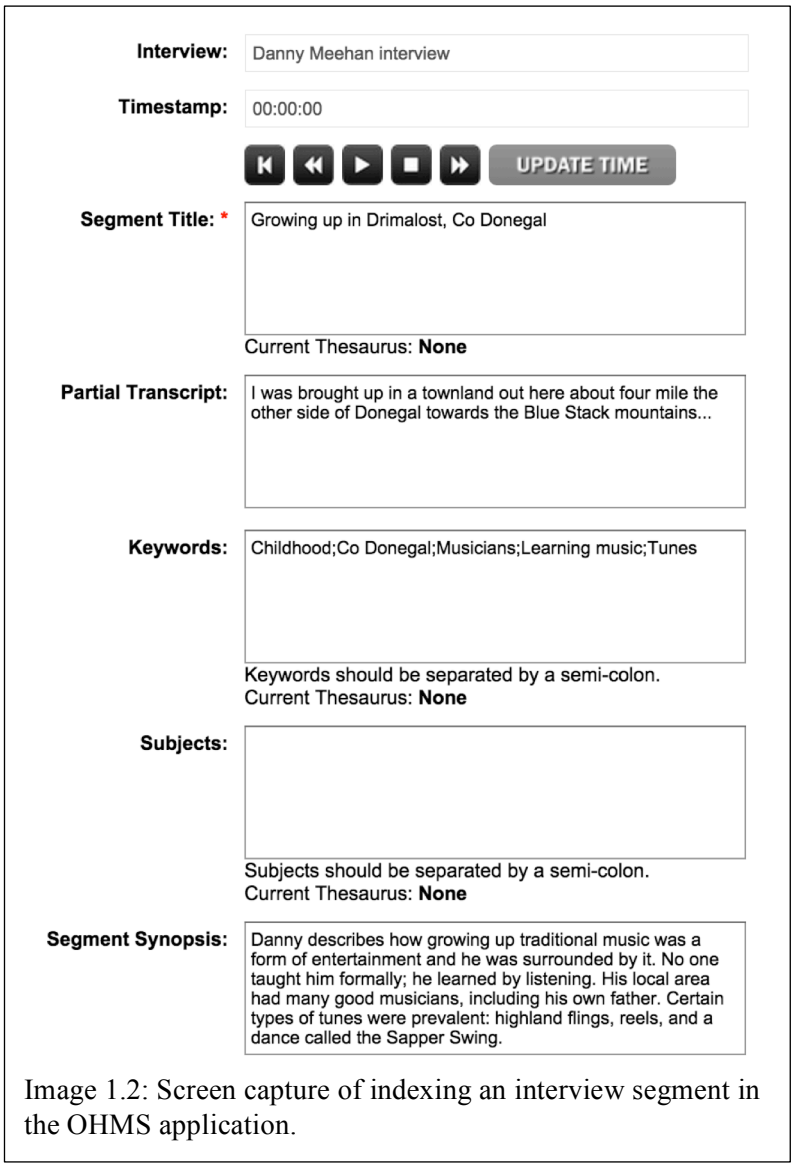


Image 1.2: Screen capture of indexing an interview segment in the OHMS application.

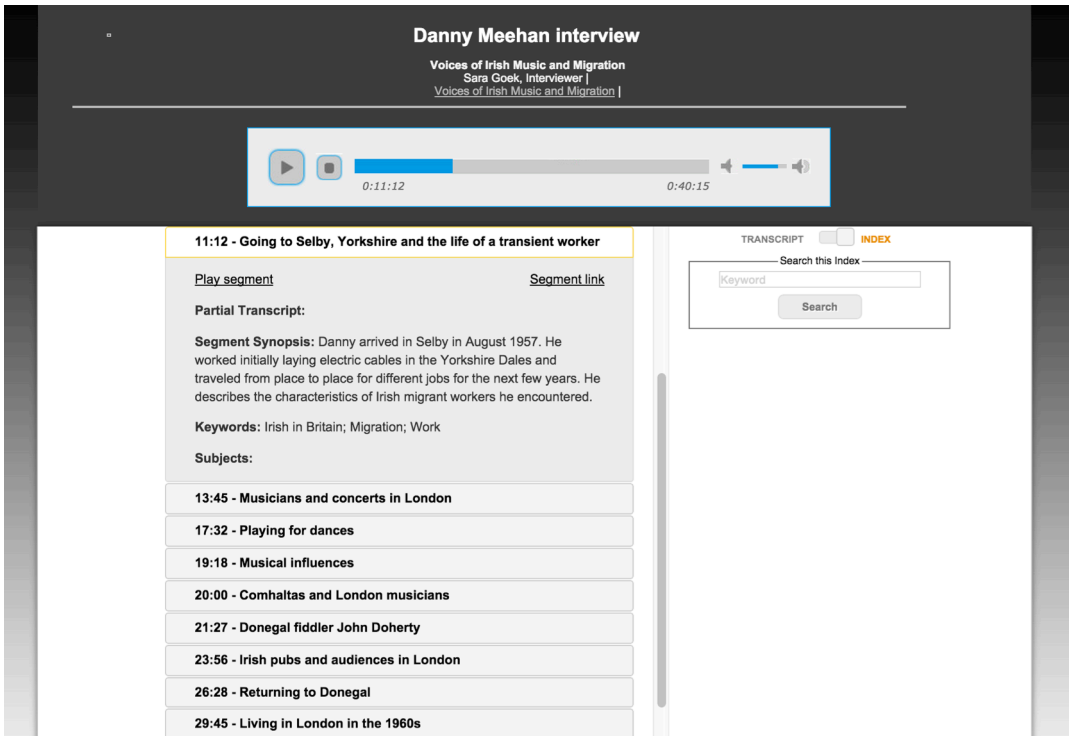


Image 1.3: Screen capture of using the index in the OHMS viewer.

In 2006 Alastair Thomson identified four paradigm transformations in oral history that have led to the current state of the field: its expansion as a source in the post-war era, recognition of the value of subjectivity from the late 1970s, changes in perceptions of the role of the oral historian from the 1980s, and the on-going digital revolution.[101] My work exists at the cutting edge of the field in all four areas: the sources contribute to understanding a previously marginalized generation; I use interdisciplinary modes of analysis to delve into subjective interpretations; I recognize that the interview is a social relationship and the nature of that relationship affects the final result; and the digital archive I have developed makes the use of current technologies to enhance accessibility and future use. The digital revolution remains a work-in-progress and its full outcome and implications remain hazy in the distance. Though a complicated process, only by opening oral history sources to the public with respect for their original form can they truly have the potential to alter the 'content and purpose of history,' broadening the historical record and promoting further inquiry.[102]

[101] Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', pp.49-70.
[102] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.3; Frisch, 'Oral History and the Digital Revolution', p.113.

Chapter 2

Irish Society & Migration

> To discuss Irish emigration in the twentieth century is virtually the same as to discuss Ireland, since there is scarcely a single political, social, economic, intellectual or religious problem which has not been influenced directly or indirectly by emigration. Emigration is a mirror in which the Irish nation can always see its true face.[1]

Commentators describing Ireland in the period from about 1930 to 1960 tended to use dreary terms: 'subdued, grey, unexciting and empty of promise,' with a 'respectable, decent, repressive' culture.[2] Singer Liam Clancy recalls, 'my memories of those years are the sizzling of wet turf, wet logs, constant rain, depression, everybody leaving, no work, ration books, the slow re-emergence'.[3] Economic stagnation, low marriage rates, population decline, widespread poverty, and high rates of emigration all characterized Irish society in the mid-twentieth century and contributed to the dreary image. As Dermot Keogh writes, 'tens of thousands left in the 1950s to find jobs abroad. The Ireland in which they were born and lived showed no signs of recovery. There was no "economic miracle" in the last decade of Éamon de Valera's Ireland.'[4]

Brian Fallon challenges these perceptions, arguing that the era 'was not one of regression, but rather of deep social and cultural change' and 'the accepted picture of a culturally chauvinistic statelet shutting its doors (and windows) on international currents turns out… to be almost the reverse of the truth'.[5] While he accepts that 'deep divisions' existed in Irish society, he fails to fully explicate their

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[1] Liam Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain since World War II', in R. Kearney (ed.), *Migrations: The Irish at Home & Abroad* (Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1990), pp.45-6.
[2] Manus O'Neill in the *Standard*, May 1954, quoted in Tom Garvin, *News from a New Republic: Ireland in the 1950s* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2004), p.52; Tony O'Malley, quoted in Dermot Keogh, 'Introduction: The Vanishing Irish', in D. Keogh, F. O'Shea & C. Quinlan (eds.), *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s* (Mercier, Douglas Village, Cork, 2004), p.15; Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (Profile Books, London, 2005), p.462; Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History*, pp.200-1.
[3] Liam Clancy, interview with Miriam Nyhan, 29 March 2009, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.
[4] Keogh, 'Introduction: The Vanishing Irish', p.17.
[5] Brian Fallon, *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture 1930-1960* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1998), p.1, p.11.

consequences.[6] In primarily analyzing artists and intellectuals, he neglects to realize that many ordinary people, particularly the urban and rural working classes, struggled to make a living, let alone engage in ideological debates. Liam Kennedy makes a similar argument from an economic perspective and writes, 'the 1950s are etched in the popular imagination as the decade of crisis and stagnation in the Republic. Yet… it was during the 1950s that the foundations for a decisive break with a mediocre past were laid. Investment in infrastructure and, even more importantly, a variety of institutional innovations, helped lay the basis for future development.'[7] However, any economic or cultural merit the era possessed failed to stem the flow of the nation's children across the waters to Britain, America, and beyond. In judging the success of the government and economy, they voted with their feet.

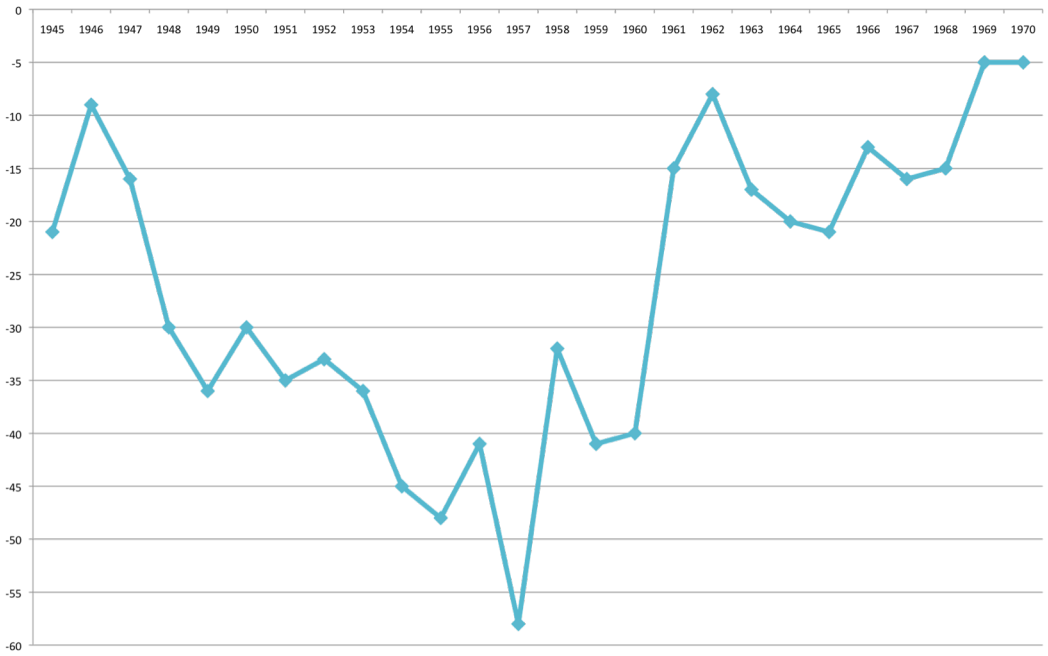
Between the censuses of 1945 and 1971 net migration amounted to an estimated loss of 665,766 people, 22.5 percent of the total population in 1945.[8] The annual total peaked in 1957 at negative 58,000, as illustrated in the graph below (figure 2.1).[9] Young people felt the worst effects: in the 1951 to '61 intercensal period, the 15 to 24 age cohort had a net migration of negative 146,900 and the 24 to 34 group lost 140,000.[10] Though emigration slowed in the 1960s, it did not cease. Considerable regional variation persisted and young people continued to leave in large numbers.[11] The revolution that many historians consider ushered in by the publication of T.K. Whitaker's *Economic Development* in 1958, the foundation of a national television service with the Broadcasting Act of 1960, and the 'best of decades' that followed, proceeded unevenly; Ireland remained an unequal society.[12] Viewing 1958 as a watershed and Whitaker as 'the father of Irish modernity' creates

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[6] Fallon, *An Age of Innocence*, p.1.
[7] Liam Kennedy, *The Modern Industrialization of Ireland, 1940-1988* (Dundalgan Press, Dundalk, 1989), p.13.
[8] Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4 (Stationary Office, Dublin, 2007), table 1.
[9] National Economic and Social Council, The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration, p.55.
[10] Bronwen Walter, Breda Gray, Linda Almeida Dowling & Sarah Morgan, 'A Study of the Existing Sources of Information and Analysis about Irish Emigrants and Irish Communities Abroad' (Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, 2002), table 1.8, p.11.
[11] Between 1961 and 1966, men age 15 to 24 had a net migration (in thousands) of -39.7 and women, -36.9. This only marginally improved between 1966 and 1971 with net migration of -31.2 for men and -29.2 for women. Damien Courtney, 'A Quantification of Irish Migration with Particular Emphasis on the 1980s and 1990s', in A. Bielenberg (ed.), *The Irish Diaspora* (Longman, Harlow, England & New York, 2000), p.296.
[12] Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, pp.24-5.

additional problems because it emphasizes a false dichotomy between traditional or native economic models (pre-1958) with modern or neoliberal ones (post-1958).[13]

Figure 2.1: Net migration (000s), 1945-70



Source: National Economic and Social Council, *The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration* (NESC, Dublin, 1991), p.55.

This chapter analyzes the background of the post-war migrant generation, its importance in assessing the ways they tell their life stories, and the need to place migration in the context of the social and cultural history of Ireland. Born between 1928 and 1950, my interviewees' stories of their youth depict a two-sided experience: many grew up in conditions of economic hardship, but they simultaneously emphasize the positive values of community, hard work, and enjoyment. Both strands feed into their answers to the question 'why did you leave?' As the two life story case studies in final section illustrate, narrators' subsequent experiences and current feelings influence how they speak of their backgrounds and decision to migrate. Considering why people left, what they left behind, where they went, and how they have subsequently made sense of those decisions in their memories is crucial to understanding the development of Irish migrant communities, culture, and identity discussed in the following chapters.

[13] Lionel Pilkington, 'Closing remarks [untitled]', New Voices conference, National University of Ireland Galway (5 June 2014).

I. Understanding Migration

Assessments of Irish migration have tended to approach it from either the perspective of departure or arrival. Politicians have addressed the subject, but to the present day they consistently treat it as an undesirable 'problem' while largely absolving themselves of responsibility, as exemplified in both the name and focus of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems, established in 1948.[14] A 1953 government memorandum began with the statement that 'the large scale emigration of young Irish girls to Britain for domestic and other employment has created grave social and moral problems,' a position the Catholic Church also adopted.[15] Follow-up letters from interested parties put forward proposals to alleviate those 'problems' including regulating employment agencies, restricting emigration, and hiring a dedicated welfare officer connected to the embassy in London. However, after lengthy correspondence, the conclusion reached was that divergent views prevented 'any positive recommendations being made to the Government on this subject'.[16] The Irish government took no action and left the care of its migrants, male and female, to British welfare services and charitable organizations, including those connected with the Church. Historians have often treated emigration in similar fashion, with Mary E. Daly focusing on it as a major factor contributing to what she terms 'the slow failure' of population decline in independent Ireland.[17] The migrants themselves received little attention once they departed, unless they could be canvassed for funds or political clout, or if they returned successful and wealthy.[18]

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[14] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp.374-5, p.385. Chapter 7, Part 2 of the Commission's report is titled 'The Problem of Emigration'. While it acknowledges the economic root causes of emigration, it also focuses on people's dissatisfaction with ways of life accepted by previous generations, thus exempting the government of some responsibility. Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems, 1948-1954, *Reports* (Stationary Office, Dublin, 1954), pp.134-43.

[15] Memorandum, 'Proposals for the alleviation of Problems arising out of Emigration of Young Irish Girls to Britain' (November 1953), Department of the Taoiseach, S.11582E, NAI. The perceived dangers to young, single women were of particular concern. Jennifer Redmond, '"Sinful Singleness"? Exploring Discourses on Irish Single Women's Emigration to England, 1922-1948', *Women's History Review*, vol.17, no.3 (July 2008), pp.455-76; Pauric Travers, '"There was nothing for me there": Irish Female Emigration, 1922-71', in O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide*, vol.4, *Irish Women and Irish Migration*, p.163.

[16] Memorandum, 'Proposals for the alleviation of Problems arising out of Emigration of Young Irish Girls to Britain' (November 1953), Department of the Taoiseach, S.11582E, NAI.

[17] Mary E. Daly, *The Slow Failure: Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1920-1973* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 2006).

[18] For example, one of J.J. Lee's only references to Irish-Americans relates to how the Dublin government used them in relations with both the British and Germans to maintain neutrality during the Second World War. *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp.252-3.

Once the emigrants became immigrants, historians took up their story from that perspective. They have written about the Irish in America, Australia, Britain, and elsewhere, but frequently failed to fully unite these stories with the background of the migrants.[19] In these depictions Ireland has relevance to the immigrants as a source of identity or explanation for their hardships; it is neglected as a formative influence in their lives and focal point of their social networks.[20] The concept of transnationalism utilized in this research (see the introduction) unites these approaches and recognizes that individuals, communities, and identities can cross national boundaries in different ways at different points in their lives.[21] Personal accounts show that contrary to the two-sided picture of departure and arrival, connections and interactions between Ireland and her migrants across the globe continued long after the act of emigration.[22] Before President Mary Robinson ever spoke of cherishing the diaspora, the link between Ireland and her migrants existed on many levels, personal and familial, as well as economic and political.[23]

To create continuity in individuals' lives before, during, and after migration, it is essential to understand the conditions that contributed to their departure. Geographers and economists have detailed numerous theories to explain the causes of migration: macro theory, micro theory, the new economics of migration, dual labour market theory, and world systems theory. They have others to explain its perpetuation: network theory, institutional theory, cumulative causation, and migration systems theory.[24] Historians tend not to reference or adhere to these exclusively. Nonetheless, their influence is apparent because historical works often emphasize either economic causes or rational choice, classifying 'types' of migration

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[19] Delaney, 'Our Island Story?', pp. 84-93.

[20] Examples of this include: Denis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1973) and Kevin O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain* (Torc, Dublin, 1974). An exception is Kerby Miller's *Emigrants and Exiles*, which traces the idea of emigration as exile to Irish cultural traits of the early nineteenth century. However, this argument is somewhat problematic. Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison', pp.137-8; Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1985).

[21] Patricia Seed in Bayly et al., 'AHR Conversation: On Transnational History', p.1443; Deacon, Russell & Woollacott, Introduction to *Transnational Lives,* p.7.

[22] Delaney, 'Our Island Story?', pp.94-5.

[23] Mary Robinson, 'Cherishing the Diaspora', address to Joint Sitting Houses of the Oireachtas, 2 Feb. 1995.

[24] Douglas Massey, et al., 'Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal', *Population and Development Review*, vol.19, no.3 (Sept. 1993), pp.431-66; Steven Loyal, 'Immigration', in S. O'Sullivan (ed.), *Contemporary Ireland: A Sociological Map* (University College Dublin Press, Dublin, 2007); Jim Mac Laughlin, *Ireland: The Emigrant Nursery and the World Economy* (Cork University Press, Cork, 1994), pp.31-3.

and thereby creating artificial boundaries.[25] In the former case, J.J. Lee writes, 'they were driven overwhelmingly by economic necessity. And not by the necessity of exaggerated expectations either.'[26] On the other end of the spectrum, P.J. Drudy states, 'it could… be contended that many of the brightest and the most enterprising left, while the conservative and those with little initiative remained behind.'[27] His words underscore the role of emigrants as active executors of their own destiny and largely disregard those who faced constricted choices or would rather have remained at home.

While these positions are not mutually exclusive, what they have in common is that prioritizing them marginalizes the *meaning and experience* of migration. They reveal little about how people made sense of their lives. Geographer Tony Fielding writes of the tendency to downplay the human and cultural aspects of migration:

> Moving from one place to another is nearly always a *major event*. It is one of those events around which an individual's biography is built. The feelings associated with migration are usually complicated, the decision to migrate is typically difficult to make, and the outcome usually involves mixed emotions… Migration tends to expose one's personality, it expresses one's loyalties and reveals one's values and attachments (often previously hidden). It is a statement of an individual's world-view, and is, therefore, an extremely *cultural* event. And yet, when we study migration scientifically, we seem to forget all this. Migration is customarily conceptualized as a product of the material forces at work in our society… the migrant is seen either as a 'rational economic man' choosing individual advancement by responding to the economic signals of the job and housing markets, or as a virtual prisoner of his or her class position, and thereby subject to powerful structural forces set in motion by the logic of capitalist accumulation.[28]

History, and oral history in particular, can balance these views by focusing on individuals rather than aggregate populations and political discourses. In doing so, 'we confront the awkward realities of people who fit only very uncomfortably into

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[25] Colin Pooley, 'Introduction: Approaches to the Study of Migration and Social Change', in C.G. Pooley & I.D. Whyte (eds.), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration* (Routledge, London & New York, 1991), pp.5-6, p.13; Alan O'Day, 'Revising the Diaspora', in G. Boyce & A. O'Day (eds.), *The Making of Modern Irish History* (Routledge, London & New York, 1996), pp.190-1.

[26] Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, p.384.

[27] P.J. Drudy, 'Irish Population Change and Emigration since Independence', in P.J. Drudy (ed.), *The Irish in America: Emigration, Assimilation and Impact*, Irish Studies 4 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985), p.72.

[28] Emphasis in original. Tony Fielding, *Migration Processes and Patterns*, vol.1 (1992), p.201, cited in Keith Halfacree, 'A Utopian Imagination in Migration's *Terra Incognita*? Acknowledging the Non-Economic Worlds of Migration Decision-Making', *Population, Space and Place*, vol.10 (2004), p.240.

the simple categories of the subject'.[29] The biographical approach that Fielding and others have advocated looks at migration not as an isolated, discrete action, but rather as an integral part of a life story – past, present, and future.[30] It therefore must begin with an examination of the social, cultural, and economic conditions from which the migrants emerged.

II. Irish Society, c.1930-60

In relation to questions about where the interviewees grew up and their families, a number of common themes arise in their accounts. These fit into roughly two categories: economic and living conditions, and social and cultural life. The former includes topics such as parents' occupations, electricity and running water, radio and television, education, and first jobs. The latter category focuses on ways in which people enjoyed themselves despite the hardships, through visits to neighbours, special occasions and holidays, music, and dancing. The importance of class and geographical distinctions also becomes apparent in consideration of these practices.

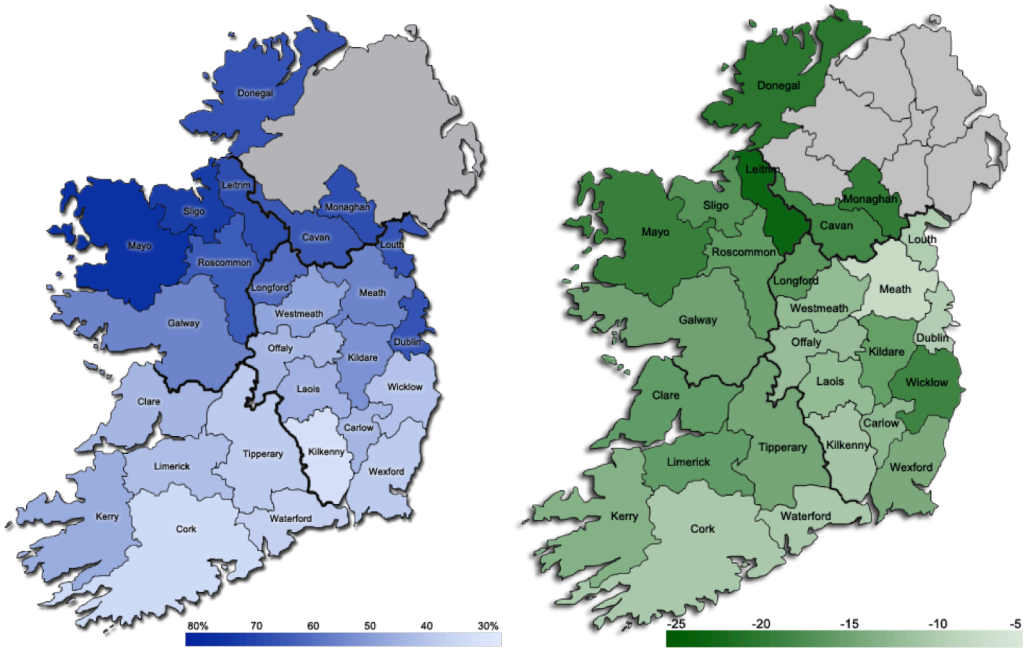
Economic and Living Conditions

In demographic terms, most post-war migrants came from the counties on the western seaboard, areas with a high percentage of small farms, poor land, and limited industrial development. Regional disparities compounded the fundamental economic problems of the country as a whole, which included 'little indigenous manufacturing and virtually no commercial exploitation of natural resources; small-scale and inefficient agriculture; poor dispersal of resources; weak infrastructure' and scant opportunity for social mobility through vocational or third-level education.[31] The maps below (figures 2.2 and 2.3) illustrate the percentage of smallholdings under thirty acres and rates of net migration for each county, showing that the same regions had high instances of both. In 1950, 60 percent of land holdings in the state were between one and thirty acres and in 1951 the average rate of net migration stood at -13.4 per 1,000. However, some counties had worse conditions, such as

[29] Eric Richards, 'Voices of British and Irish Migrants in Nineteenth Century Australia', in Pooley & Whyte (eds.), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants*, p.35.
[30] Keith H. Halfacree & Paul J. Boyle, 'The Challenge Facing Migration Research: The Case for a Biographical Approach', *Progress in Human Geography*, vol.17, no.3 (1993), p.337; A. James Hammerton & Alastair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's Invisible Migrants* (Manchester University Press, Manchester & New York, 2005).
[31] Hazelkorn, '"We Can't All Live on a Small Island"', p.182.

corresponding rates of 76.9 percent and -19.1 in Mayo and 69.7 percent and -23.1 in Leitrim.[32]

Figure 2.2, left: Percentage of land holdings under 30 Acres, 1950
Figure 2.3, right: Net migration rates per 1,000 by county, 1951-56



Sources: Central Statistics Office, *Farming Since the Famine*, Table 9; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, Appendix 12, p.311. Maps created by Sara Goek.

Oral histories frame these issues in personal terms and interviewees in this study described the struggle to make a living, especially in large families. They mixed forms of income, supplementing agricultural work with other labour when possible. The eighth of eleven children born on a small farm in south Sligo, Kevin Henry explains how his father utilized local resources to survive:

> He was a small farmer and in order to make hens [sic] meet, as we say… just above poverty, we burned lime for the land and for disinfectant, for whitewashing, there was no such thing as paint. We burned the lime and put the lime, made out of limestone, and put it into water and it bubbled up and you threw it on the walls and it disinfected every place and you also did it for land. During the war you could get no fertilizer, so therefore you used the lime for the land too and it sort of loosened up the land if you hadn't used it for thirty or forty years, you know, it had gone into real hard stuff. That was another ways of making a living, quarry the stones, burn the turf, and it was hard because you had smoke coming from this and the limestone burning and you had two or three days of torture, you had to go in through the smoke and put layers of turf and limestone on it, then open up the

[32] Central Statistics Office, *Farming Since the Famine: Irish Farm Statistics 1847-1996* (Dublin, 1997), table 9; Enda Delaney, *Demography, State and Society: Irish Migration to Britain, 1921-1971* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2000), Appendix 12, p.311; Andy Bielenberg & Raymond Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland Since Independence* (Routledge, Oxon, UK, 2013), p.50.

> bottom and if it was full you took it out and you sold it. So that was another part, that was seasonal, if you know what I mean.

Their family had the only limekiln in the area and used it to increase their overall income. Nonetheless, the farm could not provide work for all and with few other options available, 'by the time the youngest was born the oldest had left, that was a ways of life for us.' The only time all eleven siblings in the family came together was at their mother's funeral in 1972.

Danny Meehan from Drimalost, Co. Donegal, a townland in the Blue Stack Mountains, reports mixing forms of income in a similar fashion: 'Big family. Twenty-five acres of land, so that was hard going for my dad… [He was a] farmer, yeah, and he'd do work on the roads and he used to make creels and he'd sell turf and stuff just to supplement the financial problems my mom would have, you know.' His father also worked seasonally in England during the 1950s to keep the family afloat financially and all but one of Danny's eleven siblings emigrated. Those without land could face more acute problems. Jimmy O'Brien describes his local area in Kerry: 'the land wasn't great and we didn't have a farm at home so my parents and all belonging to me, they all worked in the bogs and around the place and worked for the council. They all made a living and survived. I grew up in that environment.' Families in strained circumstances also hired out children for domestic or agricultural labour during the summer or once they had left school at fourteen.[33] Income that came from selling lime, footing turf, repairing roads for the county council, or children's work played an important role in maintaining families.

As Kevin Henry suggests above, the Second World War (known in the vernacular as 'the Emergency') exacerbated these problems. Shortages of petrol and rubber reduced transport options in already isolated communities and led to the development of a black market in bicycle parts following the ban on private motoring in 1942.[34] Kevin recalls the inability to travel, saying 'bad bicycles at the time, no tyres, the war was on. You had to come to a full stop instead of taking out the fellow with the four legs.' He also mentions using candles as the primary source of light because of the scarcity of lamp oil. Farming families faced less severe food shortages than their urban counterparts, because they could eat what they produced,

[33] Con Griffin, interview with Conor Long, 14 Nov. 2014, *Oral History @UCC*; Elizabeth Kiely & Máire Leane, 'Female Domestic and Farm Workers in Munster, 1936-1960: Some Insights from Oral History', *Saothar*, vol.29 (2004), p.58.
[34] Bryce Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War: Farewell to Plato's Cave* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2014), p.56.

but the image of the abundant 'rural idyll' presented in some wartime travellers' accounts does not stand up to scrutiny.[35] Costs of living rose with rationing of staples including tea, tobacco, and flour, placing additional burdens on the women – rural and urban – who had to manage households.[36] They describe cooking using sawdust for fuel in a biscuit tin and recycling the material for clothes many times over, both emblematic of a 'make do and mend' attitude.[37] However, this is not to suggest that they accepted their lot without protest: the Irish Housewives' Association petitioned the government in 1941 on issues of food and fuel and in March 1942 organized a march in Dublin. Rationing policies enacted over the course of the war indicate they had some success.[38]

The question of where the money would come from to sustain the household constituted the other primary concern of families as unemployment rates in both city and country rose during the depression and war years. The government responded with the instigation of the Construction Corps and Turf Schemes, which used a male labour force compelled to work with the threat of withholding unemployment benefit payments.[39] Brian Behan experienced both initiatives and termed the former 'a Hitler Youth idea dreamed up by de Valera'.[40] Though actually the brainchild of Sean Lemass, Behan was not the only commentator to draw parallels to fascist youth groups.[41] The Turf Schemes proved equally unpopular, with low wages, bad food, and poor living conditions. Both Brian Behan and Kevin Henry recall participating in a turf workers' strike that 'didn't get anywhere'.[42] Having a trade offered the hope of upward social mobility, but training could pose problems. Kevin says, 'they tried to make a grocer out of me! [*Laughs*] But, sadly, I didn't, they took me out of the business, because in Ireland at that particular time, believe it or not, you had to do three years apprentice for nothing, which was sad in a ways. You had to work for nothing for three years… 'Twas slavery.' Even those who earned trade qualifications

[35] Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A History of Ireland during the Second World War* (Faber & Faber, London, 2007), pp.252-3.
[36] Mary Muldowney's book *The Second World War and Irish Women*, though focused predominantly on Dublin and Belfast, offers further insight into these issues.
[37] Clare, interview with Mary Muldowney, 6 July 2002, The Second World War and Irish Women Collection, IQDA; Madge Ahern & Sheila O'Leary, interview with Margaret Kearns, 29 Nov. 2001, WOHP UCC; Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, p.43.
[38] Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War*, pp.58-9; 'Housewives Petition Government', *The Irish Times*, 6 May 1941.
[39] Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War*, pp.159-60.
[40] Brian Behan, *With Breast Expanded* (MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1964), p.32.
[41] Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War*, p.159.
[42] Kevin Henry, interview with the author, 19 April 2013; Behan, *With Breast Expanded*, pp.49-53.

found it difficult to enter employment in Ireland due to restrictive hiring practices.[43] For an estimated 120,000 men and women between 1939 and 1945, emigration and the freedoms that war work offered could constitute a survival strategy, act of resistance, or positive opportunity to expand personal horizons and they easily found places for themselves in the British labour force.[44]

While the struggle to survive may seem to preclude all else, narratives of growing up in Ireland do not dwell solely on hardships and poverty. They recall the good times as well as the bad and emphasize the values imbued by family and social environment. Thus, in describing his relatives' 'work in the bog', Jimmy O'Brien stresses its communal nature and the enjoyment of songs and stories during breaks:

> You had the *meitheals* in the bog cutting turf, they called it coring. I'd come to you for a day and you'd go to me some other day. There'd be about eight or nine people in a *meitheal* cutting a bank of turf… The women would bring the tea to the bog then. They'd have made the tea inside and they'd put it into bottles and they'd put the bottles into an old sock. I'm not too sure whether it had been washed or not but it didn't do any harm anyways! It didn't kill anyone! They'd arrive with that and they'd bring the bread and butter and they'd all sit around. They might have a fire made and they might boil the water and make the tea in the bog. Some of them would divide it if 'twas near enough to the house that the women could deliver the [tea and food], because you'd be wasting a man making the tea cooking on the old billycan and this kind of thing. But there'd be always, if there was nine or ten men in a *meitheal*, there'd be always some character and he'd be trying to delay the lunch hour, we'll call it. He'd be trying to hold them up and he might sing a bit of a song or telling stories and next thing it would only be half an hour sit-down and there could be an hour gone with them held up. That was more of the enjoyment.

Meitheal is the Irish word for a working party and Jimmy describes how neighbours took turns to help each other.[45] While the men did the heavy turf cutting, women ensured they had tea and lunch, delivering it out to the bog in addition to managing the housework and other agricultural tasks.[46] All members of the community participated and their cooperation 'existed not only as a mutual aid system in a society characterised by a subsistence economy, but also as a social outlet where

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[43] Garvin, *News from a New Republic*, p.118; Liam Cullinane, '"Any Jobs Going?" Career Advice in Post-War Ireland', *The Dustbin of History*, 8 April 2013 (accessed Jan. 2015) <https://thedustbinofhistory.wordpress.com/2013/04/08/any-jobs-going-career-advice-in-post-war-ireland/>.

[44] Wills, *That Neutral Island*, p.314; Jennifer Redmond, 'The Largest Remaining Reserve of Manpower: Historical Myopia, Irish Women Workers and World War Two', *Saothar*, vol.36 (2011); Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, pp.70-96.

[45] Anne O'Dowd, *Meitheal: A Study of Co-operative Labour in Rural Ireland* (Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, Dublin, 1981). Many other terms exist for this type of work, but *meitheal* is the most common. O'Dowd found records of its use in twenty-two of thirty-two counties in Ireland (p.57).

[46] Kiely & Leane, 'Female Domestic and Farm Workers in Munster', pp.57-65.

gatherings were accompanied by festivity and entertainment' to take their minds off the hard labour.[47]



Image 3.1: Turf cutting, Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry, 1947, National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin. Courtesy of the Irish Virtual Research Library and Archives, ref. no. B102.18.00005.

Jimmy tells a similar anecdote about hay threshing: small farmers did not all own a threshing machine, so one who did moved from one plot of land to the next, with 'a big crowd following'. The local community organized a dance on the night of the threshing, providing an incentive for participation.[48] With humour in his voice, Jimmy describes the courtship rituals that took place on those occasions:

> Some fellow said one time that all the women were mad about the fellas with the tractor, you know, and I said 'what is it?' and he said, 'the smell of

[47] O'Dowd, *Meitheal*, p.119; Lillis Ó Laoire, 'Donegal: Makers, Songs and Singers', in J. MacLaughlin & S. Beattie (eds.), *An Historical, Environmental and Cultural Atlas of County Donegal* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2013), p.440.

[48] O'Dowd, *Meitheal*, pp.110-9. One individual recorded in the Irish Folklore Commission collection said, 'very often people would go to a meitheal when they knew there'd be a bit of a spree after it and would consider that sufficient payment for their day's work' (p.171).

> the oil!' The smell of the [petrol] he said, that was it. They'd be courting the women that night out around rakes of straw and everything. 'Twas all part of the great fun and the great occasion.

While this makes a charming anecdote, it glosses over the fact that owning a tractor meant not only smelling like oil, but also possessing enough land and capital to invest in one. In 1951 the ratio of tractors to land holdings over fifteen acres in Ireland on average was 1:15, while the ratio of draught horses to land holdings stood at nearly 1:1.[49] Women may have shown more interesting in courting a man with money, property, and prospects.[50] The men who lacked those things perhaps explained it away with jokes about 'the smell of the oil' and emphasis on communal work and shared resources. They used humour to deflect from social tensions, but nonetheless it points to the heart of class divisions in rural Irish society.[51] As Maura Cronin argues, 'there existed simultaneously a deep social divide *and* forces that bridged that divide.'[52] Requirements of work and mutual dependence on neighbours could temporarily override distinctions between small and middling farmers and between farmers and labourers. All worked and socialized together while maintaining an engrained awareness of who came from what background, in this case symbolized by tractor ownership.[53]

In these narratives the tractor itself represents the immense changes taking place in Irish agriculture in the mid-twentieth century and it had a central role in bringing them about. Previously, Jerry Lynch recalls, 'everything was done by hand, all the tillage, all the hay-cutting, all the woodcutting, all the timber cutting was done by hand' or with work animals. By the 1950s mechanization and the adoption of tractors modernized these processes, 'mark[ing] the beginning of a major revolution

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[49] Damian Hannan, 'Kinship, Neighbourhood and Social Change in Irish Rural Communities', *Economic and Social Review*, vol.3, no.2 (1972), p.165.

[50] Low marriage rates concerned many commentators on emigration and population decline in the 1950s: Damian Hannan, *Rural Exodus: A Study of the Forces Influencing the Large-Scale Migration of Irish Rural Youth* (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1970); John A. Jackson, *Report on the Skibbereen Social Survey* (Human Sciences Committee, Dublin, 1967); John A. O'Brien (ed.), *The Vanishing Irish: The Enigma of the Modern World* (W.H. Allen, London, 1954). O'Brien goes so far as to imply that low marriage rates resulted from the unwillingness of bachelors to marry, as if a plethora of women waited there for them to ask (p.33). Women's voices and desires are completely absent from his text.

[51] Passerini discusses uses of humour and laughter under the fascist regime in Italy and shows how it can be interpreted as subversive, a challenge to the established order. Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Robert Lumley & Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009), pp.85-93.

[52] Maura Cronin, 'Class and Status in Twentieth-Century Ireland: The Evidence of Oral History', *Saothar*, vol.32 (2007), p.34.

[53] Ibid., pp.40-41.

in Irish farming' and contributing to the rapidly declining agricultural labour force and number of smallholdings.[54] Persons employed in agriculture dropped from 40.3 percent of the total labour force in the state in 1951 to 25.8 percent in 1971, as mechanization took hold and other industries developed.[55] Between 1946 and 1961 the number of agricultural labourers declined by 48 percent and the number of relatives assisting declined by 39 percent.[56] Mechanization precipitated a drop in necessary labour inputs for the same outputs, which meant that few sons and daughters of small farmers and labourers could have followed in their parents' footsteps, even if they had desired it, and cooperative labour customs such as the *meitheal* fell by the wayside.[57] The natural increase in population plus decline in agricultural labour-force meant that only the annual creation of 30,000 jobs in non-agricultural sectors in the 1950s would have provided everyone with work.[58] Jerry Lynch identifies the human impact of these changes, something economic histories often neglect: 'Automation is a thing there's two sides to. Automation is great for the industry at a big scale but it can put an awful lot of people out of work.' Jerry and others who felt the brunt of this transformation joined the thousands emigrating in the post-war period.

The hardships involved in making a living were not confined to rural areas. Kevin McDermott grew up in a family of seven children in Cavan Town, raised by his mother because his father had migrated in order to support them:

> My father was in England since 1943. My mother reared what was left of us, so I didn't see my father for thirteen years. Well, having said that, I only saw him once a year for thirteen years. He used to come home at Christmas. So my mother was the queen of the household. My father, the only connection we had with him was his registered letter coming in every fortnight I think it was and his money. He used to send me sixpence or a shilling and he used to send me comics and he used to send me stacks and stacks of songbooks from London. Now, as my older brothers and sisters, the older ones, as they came to their teens, they all left and went to England.

Remittances helped the family survive. Despite living in a town and having trained in a technical school for a couple years, Kevin was unable to get a steady job. He

[54] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland Since Independence*, pp.57-8.
[55] Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population of Ireland 1951* & *Census of Population of Ireland 1971*.
[56] James A. Walsh, 'Adoption and Diffusion Processes in the Mechanisation of Irish Agriculture', *Irish Geography*, vol.25, no.1 (1992), pp.33-53; Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland since Independence*, pp.57-8.
[57] O'Dowd, *Meitheal*, p.122.
[58] Gerry O'Hanlon, 'Population Change in the 1950s: A Statistical Review', in Keogh, O'Shea & Quinlan (eds.), *The Lost Decade*, p.74.

played with dance bands and had a seasonal job 'washing bottles and working on a lorry delivering minerals and beer' for a couple months in the summer, at Christmastime, and Easter. However, Mary Daly writes, 'in postwar Ireland the demand seems to have been not just for employment, but for regular employment'.[59] Many migrants mentioned having some form of seasonal work, agricultural or otherwise, before leaving, but an amount insufficient to earn a living. Kevin enlisted in the RAF for three years and joined the rest of his family in London in 1956, his mother and youngest brother having relocated there while he served abroad.[60]

Women faced constricted opportunities in country and city, with their work 'taken for granted' in and out of the home.[61] Married women were excluded from public sector work from 1933 and the Conditions of Employment Act of 1936, which allowed discriminatory treatment, curtailed their ability to find and retain a job outside the home, however necessary it might be for the family's survival.[62] Young, single women also had to negotiate limited opportunities, familial needs, and societal expectations of femininity, marriage, and motherhood.[63] Despite concerns about low marriage rates and the dearth of women in rural Ireland – 868 women per 1000 men in 1951 – the government proposals included employment or emigration bans, rather than positive measures aimed at improving living standards.[64] A lack of social and material amenities made rural life unattractive compared to its urban counterpart, particularly for women. Joan Daly from Co. Kerry summed up the few job options: 'You had the factory (of which there were very few), you had the nurse, and you had the teacher. You had the priest's housekeeper, of which there were very few, or you could go into service and into service paid very, very little.'[65] In the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth many young women had entered domestic service, but employment in this sector dropped considerably from

[59] Daly, *The Slow Failure*, p.62.
[60] Kevin McDermott's memoir focuses primarily upon his childhood and time in the RAF, while the interview concentrated on his time in England and return. *The Time of the Corncrake: An Irishman's Memories of His Life in the 1940s and 1950s* (Trafford Publishing, Victoria, Canada, 2004).
[61] Madge Ahern & Sheila O'Leary, interview with Margaret Kearns, 29 Nov. 2001, WOHP UCC.
[62] Clear, *Women of the House*, p.2; Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, p.48.
[63] Elizabeth Kiely & Máire Leane, *Irish Women at Work, 1930-1960: An Oral History* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin & Portland, OR, 2012), pp.12-3.
[64] Mary E. Daly, '"Turn on the Tap": The State, Irish Women & Running Water', in Maryann Gianella Valiulis & Mary O'Dowd (eds.), *Women & Irish History* (Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1997), p.206; Daly, *The Slow Failure*, pp.43-4; O'Brien (ed.), *The Vanishing Irish*.
[65] Joan Daly, interview with Máire Leane, 2 July 2001, WOHP UCC.

86,102 women in 1936 to 39,971 in 1961.[66] White-collar jobs such as clerical work, teaching, and nursing grew gradually and had a higher status than factory or service work. However, entering these occupations depended on access to training or education beyond primary school.[67] Facing such circumstances if they remained at home, many women found the 'great freedom' of life abroad – with independence, high wages, and dances every night of the week – irresistible.[68]




Images 2.2 & 2.3: An open hearth and a paraffin oil lamp on the wall in the restored Meehan family cottage, Drimalost, Co. Donegal. Photographs by the author, 2012.

Comparisons between living conditions in rural Ireland and those of urban Britain or America, and between the experiences of their youth and contemporary life, feature prominently in the interviewees' memories. Central among these are electricity, running water, central heating, and transportation. Describing his youth in Ballinaleck, Co. Fermanagh, Cathal McConnell recalls,

> I remember way back in those days it's a country area and I suppose it was kind of the end of an era, if you like. There was few cars on the road at that time. I remember in the early days we didn't have electricity, we just had the

[66] Kiely & Leane, *Irish Women at Work*, pp.41-53; Kiely & Leane, 'Female Domestic and Farm Workers in Munster, 1936-1960', pp.57-65

[67] The higher status associated with these jobs did not necessarily mean higher wages. Liam Cullinane, '"As If You Were Something Under Their Shoe": Class, Gender and Status among Cork Textile Workers', in David Convery (ed.), *Locked Out: A Century of Irish Working-Class Life* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2013), pp.184-8; Kiely & Leane, *Irish Women at Work*, pp.55-86; Mary Muldowney, 'We Were Conscious of the Sort of People We Mixed with: The State, Social Attitudes and the Family in Mid-Twentieth Century Ireland', *History of the Family*, vol.13 (2008), pp.408-10.

[68] Madge Ahern & Sheila O'Leary, interview with Margaret Kearns, 29 Nov. 2001, WOHP UCC.

> oil lamp or tilley lamp as they call it. The open fire I think, later on it was just a range, a stove.

Similarly, Jerry Lynch says of Co. Clare,

> Two years before I went we had the electricity [1957]. You had the electricity in the villages, Corofin, Kilfenora, Ennis, had it. The rural areas didn't have it. 'Tis a miracle that we aren't all blind! We had paraffin oil and paraffin lamps and candles, that was up until 1953 or '4. Then they went from paraffin oil to a tilley lamp… Then we went from there to the electricity… You wouldn't have too much light at night at all, that's for sure. You had no central heating, hardly at all here until, it would be up in the '60s before a lot of central heating started to come to the rural areas. They had it in towns and different places, but not the same as what you have now.

The ESB rural electrification scheme began in 1947 and had connected over half of rural households by 1956. However, even by 1961 only one-eighth of houses in the countryside had running water, meaning that housewives or children had to carry all water needed in the house, adding a considerable burden to the work of running the home.[69] The coming of electricity and tap water had a positive effect on rural women's lives, especially with the diffusion of labour-saving devices. Peig Bean Uí Chuinn of West Kerry chose the washing machine as the one item that had the greatest impact on her life: '*Níos déanaí, nuair a bhí mo chlann ag éirí suas, chaitheas níochán de láimh do chúig dhuine dhéag. Gan aon uisce te. Bhí caidéal againne, bhíomar níos fear as ná daoine a chaith uisce a tharrac ón tobar, ach níorbh aon dóichín mar sin fhéin é… Dá gcaithfinn aon rud amháin a fheabhsaigh mo shaol a phiocadh, ní bheadh aon amhras orm: an meaisín níocháin.*'[70] These changes occurred over many years and migrants witnessed them in the course of visits to Ireland or upon permanent return.

[69] Mary E. Daly, 'Turn on the Tap', p.207; Michael J. Shiel, *The Quiet Revolution: The Electrification of Rural, 1946-1976* (O'Brien Press, Dublin, 1984).

[70] 'When my children were small, I had to wash by hand for fifteen people. No hot water. We had a pump, we were better off than many, because we were saved the hauling of water. But it was still difficult…. If I had to pick one thing that improved my life, I would have no doubt: the washing machine.' In Brenda Ní Shúilleabháin (ed.), *Bibeanna: Memories from a Corner of Ireland* (Mercier Press, Cork, 2007), p.144.



Image 2.4: Drawing water, Cornamona, Co. Galway, Nov. 1955. National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin. Courtesy of the Irish Virtual Research Library and Archives, ref. no. F020.01.000001



Image 2.5: ESB at work, Leixlip, Co. Kildare, 1946. National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin. Courtesy of the Irish Virtual Research Library and Archives, ref. no. A001.06.00054.

In oral testimonies and memoirs the introduction of electricity takes on symbolic significance as a watershed in Irish history. When asked about changes in his lifetime, Packie Browne stated quite simply, 'the greatest change to Ireland was the rural electrification. That changed everything. It got rid of all the ghost stories, got rid of the cobwebs in the corners.' Mick Treacy offers a similar appraisal:

> When the electricity came the ghosts disappeared. Before you'd have an open fire there and a candle and a small little light and there'd be shadows in the background and everything like that. You'd be afraid to go down the hall for fear you'd be caught by something. And all that was going on and people used to tell ghost stories then. My father, I remember him telling ghost stories and my mother and all these things. As a child you'd be scared. But the electric light blew the whole thing away.

As with other facets of modernization, he recognizes that it had both positive and negative sides, saying perhaps before 'people had a better way of entertaining themselves'. Electricity and the consumer revolution that came with it irrevocably altered traditional customs and culture.[71] Nonetheless, it heralded 'another great phase in Ireland becoming awake'.[72] Electricity shedding light on 'the cobwebs in the corners' thus serves as a metaphor for greater awareness and reflection on the conditions of Irish society.

Media, which depended on the expansion of the electric grid, also played an important role in this awakening. Radio spread first following the creation 2RN in 1926 and television followed under the national service created by the Broadcasting Authority Act of 1960. As with electrification and mechanization, development was uneven, with isolated rural areas much slower to adopt these technologies than towns or cities. Vincent Campbell recalls how the community heard news before radio reached his area of the Donegal Gaeltacht:

> There was no radios in houses. I remember when the first radio came from up the glen here… That time the radios was scarce and there was very little radios actually so such a thing as certain houses used to buy a paper and read the paper for the neighbours. The neighbours would all gather round and they would read the paper for the neighbours.[73]

Likewise, Martin Niland from east Galway remembers his family getting the first radio in their village:

> I was about ten years of age when the radio came around. Our house would've been one of the first in the village to get one. I was a good ten years of age before the radio came in and of course there was no electricity,

[71] Mick Treacy, interview with the author, 3 April 2013. See also: Seán Ó Ciaráin, *Farewell to Mayo: An Emigrant's Memoirs of Ireland and Scotland* (Brookside, Dublin, 1991), p.47.
[72] Ibid.
[73] See also: Byrne, *Recollections of a Donegal Man*, p.62.

> it had to be a battery. You don't remember them days, when you'd have to take the big wet battery into town to get it charged. There'd be two or three days gone getting it charged.

The introduction of radio and television has a similar place in folk memory to that of rural electrification because of their profound impact on social life and traditions. Kevin Henry sums this up:

> Growing up, one part of our tradition was storytelling. I was born and raised without television or radios, an odd newspaper coming in, we had a weekly newspaper, that was about the local district, the county you lived in, and we grew up with stories – fairy stories, folklore, and genealogy, your next of kin and second cousins and all of that stuff. But what fascinated me more was the fairy stories and the folklore of the fairy stories it left Ireland in 1960 with the television.

However, Kevin himself had left Ireland in 1947 and bases his observations on visits and contact with his friends and relatives. Nonetheless, he calls attention to changes in Irish life and the cultural traditions he remembers and values from his childhood, the subject of the next section.

Social and Cultural Life

Fiddle player Junior Crehan (b.1908, Bonavilla, Co. Clare) recalled of his youth, 'the country house was the centre of all social activity in those days. It was not only a place of entertainment, it was also a school where the traditions of music-making, story-telling and dancing were passed on from one generation to the next.'[74] Though the interviewees in this study come from all parts of Ireland, those from rural areas describe similar patterns of socializing. Connie O'Connell went to house dances with his mother, a melodeon player:

> Where I come from, Cill na Martra [near Ballyvourney, Co. Cork], there was a tradition of house dances when I was young, when I was very young, and my mother used to play for these house dances. You'd go into the kitchen and you'd sit down and you'd play for sets. Probably there'd be only room for one set on the floor, just barely on the floor of a kitchen; farmhouses were bigger. They danced sets and I was listening to this music and watching them dance sets as well, as just a kid sitting in the corner until a certain hour of the night, then probably be taken home or whatever. I'd say the dancing went on much later. They used to have occasions such as threshings, things like that, and weddings of course. Weddings were in the houses at that time as well, not in hotels like they are nowadays. They'd be dancing mainly sets and the music for those I was listening to it as a kid so I think it is from there it grew in me that I started playing music.

Like Crehan, he underlines the importance of these gatherings in imparting cultural traditions to the next generation, repeatedly referencing his vantage point 'as just a

[74] Junior Crehan, 'Junior Crehan Remembers', *Dal gCais*, vol.3 (1977), p.72.

kid sitting in the corner'.[75] This process of transmission is neither neutral nor passive, because under the surface of the music itself lays 'a set of values and beliefs that are inextricably linked to political, social, cultural or economic power structures and ideologies in the culture at large'.[76] While music and dancing formed an integral part of social life for many, their transmission and representation reflect wider debates of class and status in Irish society.

In the passage above Connie alludes to the fact that dances were particularly popular when held for special occasions, which included weddings, threshings, wakes, or holidays. Jimmy Marshall describes one such event in his youth in Kerry:

> On Biddy's Day [St. Bridget's Day], February 1st, we would form a group, a large group, maybe about eight to ten people, guys and girls, and sometimes we'd break it up maybe into four or five and they'd go cover east, we'd go west, they go north, we go south, and we'd be out there for two or three days, long days, and we'd collect money. And we would hold a dance, and if we were lucky enough to get enough money we would have two dances! …And that would include again maybe a big barrel of Guinness and there'd be lots of bread and tea and coffee and all that. Those functions went on 'til about six or seven o'clock in the morning… Those were great times and a lot of happiness back then.

These traditions hold a special place in memory because of the 'happiness' they evoke, particularly in the context of economic malaise and subsequent migration. Jimmy O'Brien, reminiscing about celebrations for St. Bridget's Day and American wakes, said, 'I suppose you could say they were mighty times. People hadn't anything, but everything was an occasion for enjoyment.'[77] It should also be noted that interviewees only mention drinking alcohol in relation to these special occasions. Most likely because of straitened economic circumstances, neither drinking nor pubs feature in recollections of regular socializing among the rural working class, though they rose to prominence as the century progressed.[78]

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[75] These country house dances were not necessarily an age-old tradition. Reg Hall suggests the form, with dances taking place in private houses to music played by amateur musicians (enabled by the widespread availability of cheap instruments), began in the 1870s or 1880s and came to dominate thereafter, lasting into the 1960s in some locales. Reg Hall, 'Heydays Are Short-Lived: Change in Music-Making Practice in Rural Ireland, 1850-1950' in F. Vallely, H. Hamilton, E. Vallely & L. Doherty (eds.), *Crosbhealach an Cheoil = the Crossroads Conference: 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music*, Crossroads Conference (Whinstone Music, Dublin, 1999), p.79.

[76] McCarthy, *Passing It On*, p.3.

[77] Byrne, *Recollections of a Donegal Man*, pp.71-6 describes the 'big nights' or 'hooleys' held on special occasions. On St. Bridget's Day celebrations in the Sliabh Luachra area also see: Paudie Gleeson, 'My Life and Music', *Sliabh Luachra: Journal of Cumann Luachra*, vol.1, no.10 (Nov. 2000), p.14; and Jimmy Doyle, 'My Life and Music', *Sliabh Luachra: Journal of Cumann Luachra*, vol.1, no.3, Nov. 1985, p.6.

[78] Elizabeth Malcolm notes that even during the heyday of the Irish pub, c.1850 to 1950, 'in rural Ireland, regular pub-drinking was by no means the only drinking pattern evident' and drinking more

On a more casual level, people visited relatives and neighbours in the evenings, in a tradition called 'céilídhing' or 'rambling'. They would play music, dance, sing, tell stories, or play cards. This stemmed partly from necessity: 'that's all we had. We had the fiddle and the melodeon, a couple of tin whistles. No radio, no television.'[79] It also reflected the close-knit nature of rural communities.

> TOMMY HEALY: 'Round our way it might even go ten o'clock at night, somebody might be passing and go into a house, there might be instruments in the house, somebody else might come in, maybe two would start playing, maybe a half an hour later there might be four. The next thing the young ones might come in and start a set on the floor, all that type of thing. Casual.[80]
>
> BEN LENNON: When I was growing up there were about two hundred people [in the village]. Our house was a music house: my father played the fiddle and my mother played the piano. There was always people coming. It was what we called a céilídhing house. There was no such thing that time as [locks]. Doors were left open and you didn't ring doorbells, you just walked in. That's the way life was that time.
>
> JACK COEN: That's all my father did every night was play the concertina. There was no other form of amusement. We lived on a small farm, you know, and at night when all the animals were fed and supper was over there was nothing to do say from seven o'clock at night until everybody went to bed about eleven, ten or eleven, but he used to play the concertina and he practically played it every night and that's all there was. That's how I got in on the music; every tune he could play, I could lilt it. Lilting and singing.[81]
>
> VINCENT CAMPBELL: When I was young there was a fiddle hanging in every house. It was an awful place for music. We used to love the winter coming because all the hard work, it was all little farmers that time, and you gathered up, you worked hard during the summer and gathered everything up for the winter… That's a fact now, that we used to love to see the winter coming so that the music and the thing would start that they call 'raking', some of them called it 'ceilidhing', to the houses. That's how we learned all our music and song, during the winter. The older crowd would be dancing, they would be playing, everybody would come in to each other… That's the way it went on. But they were happy days, I'll tell you that. And then it left people [so] that they learned everything without, their pastime didn't cost them any money.

These four quotations, relating to communities in Sligo, Leitrim, Galway, and Donegal respectively, show similar patterns of visiting and entertainment. As musicians, many of the interviewees in this study come from families that valued

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commonly occurred for special occasions such as wakes and weddings. Pubs also remained a male-dominated environment during that time period. 'The Rise of the Pub: A Study in the Disciplining of Popular Culture', in J.S. Donnelly, Jr. & K.A. Miller, *Irish Popular Culture, 1650-1850* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin & Portland, OR, 1999), p.72.

[79] Danny Meehan, interview with the author, 11 June 2012.

[80] Tommy Healy, interview with Reg Hall, 28 October 1987, RH BL.

[81] Jack Coen (from east Galway), 'The Keane Edge Interview', audio podcast, produced by Brendan Patrick Keane (28 Jan. 2010) <http://www.irishcentral.com/story/ent/the_keane_edge/with-audio-hear-jack-coen-talk-about-his-musical-life-83046527.html>.

these practices and welcomed visits from neighbours for evenings of music, dancing, and song. Through these informal gatherings they learned their 'trade', the tunes and local inflections that define their repertoire, supporting Junior Crehan's statement that the country house served not only as a social venue but also as a 'school' of the tradition.

From these testimonies it may seem that traditional music held a revered place in the community, but this perspective comes from those who grew up surrounded by it and had a love for it throughout their lives. Others felt differently and the interviewees repeat similar phrases to describe public perceptions of traditional music: 'it wasn't very popular in the old days,' 'it wasn't well-liked,' and 'people were inclined to sort of laugh at the Irish music back home'.[82] Issues of respectability and social class lay at the heart of these views. Ben Lennon describes his own home in the 1930s and '40s:

> We had two situations. We had the kitchen and we had the parlour, the sitting room where the piano was. The kitchen was for traditional music and the parlour was for sheet music that you would buy in the shop that time and all the hit songs of the day. It was a little bit up market, as opposed to diddly-di in the kitchen. I would have been ashamed to be seen carrying a fiddle case at that time. It was looked down on, Irish music was looked down on at that time.

The 'two situations' of parlour and kitchen, even in a well-known musical family, reflect broader divisions in Irish society. Martin McMahon observes, '[it's] not a nice thing to say, but traditional music was a peasant's music. Who mixed with peasants only another peasant. You kept to yourself. Doctors had their own type of people, solicitors and priests and all the educated people, they mixed in a different world altogether even though it was the same country.' He hesitates in speaking, discomfort perhaps making the words difficult to articulate. The 'different worlds' he describes originated in occupational status, levels of education, land ownership, and rural/urban divisions. Kevin Henry says that people in Irish towns would say of traditional music, 'that's for out the country'. Its association with 'poverty' lowered its cultural cachet; it was not divorced from the 'complex rules of role and status that governed all aspects of social and economic life'.[83] As Helen O'Shea argues, meaning inheres in the listeners rather than in the music itself, because 'associations

[82] Cathal McConnell, interview with the author, 5 Dec. 2010; Eamon Flynn, interview with the author, 25 Oct. 2010; Liam Farrell, interview with the author, 1 July 2012.
[83] Vince Milne, interview with the author, 18 Feb. 2013; Hall, 'Heydays Are Short-Lived', p.77.

develop through historical narratives and within ideology'.[84] These attitudes changed gradually over the course of the twentieth century, but negative connotations lingered both in Ireland and among migrant communities abroad.

Divisions also manifested themselves on a national scale, because traditional music has a central, though contested, place at the heart of Irish culture. In the post-independence era, debates played out over the forms and representations of music in the public arena. The existence of different musical genres (classical, traditional, popular) and their class or regional associations challenged the nationalist desire to project a unified cultural image.[85] Perhaps nothing illustrates this better than the early years of the Irish radio service. Broadcasts and records from abroad had brought new types of music to Ireland, including jazz and swing, and fears that they might contaminate Irish culture led in part to the founding of 2RN. Debates in the Dáil centred on deploying broadcast media to build a national identity.[86] In his speech opening the station in January 1926, Douglas Hyde expressed the hope that the new service would draw on the richness of Irish culture and language and in doing so support the Gaelic Revival.[87] While the programming included lectures, music, and Irish language broadcasts, it also reflected 'the conservative ethos of the new state,' rooted in ideas of middle-class respectability.[88] The early transmissions did not represent music as it existed across the country and instead betrayed the influence of Gaelic League art music ideals. The opening night featured violinist Arthur Darley playing three Irish airs, a romance by Hugo Wolf, and a bourrée by Alfred Moffat, 'echoing the Victorian drawing room rather more than the raw, untutored talent of the folk music which was a vibrant presence in the countryside'.[89] The need to use musicians living in close proximity to the studios and a lack of funding for those

[84] O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*, p.6.
[85] Joseph J. Ryan, 'Nationalism and Irish Music', in G. Gillen & H, White (eds.), *Irish Musical Studies*, vol.3, *Music and Irish Cultural History* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1995), p.102. Likewise, Connell and Gibson use Benedict Anderson's ideas of imagined communities and national identity to argue, 'music, alongside national artistic traditions, common religions, ethnic identity and a range of visual symbols (flags, emblems, crests, currency, figureheads), is embedded in the creation of (and constant maintenance of) nationhood.' *Sound Tracks*, p.118.
[86] *Dáil Debates*, 'Wireless Broadcasting', vol.6, no.15 (15 Feb. 1924); *Dáil Debates*, 'Wireless Broadcasting', vol.6, no.36 (3 April 1924); Johannah Duffy, 'Jazz, Identity and Sexuality in Ireland during the Interwar Years', *Irish Journal of American Studies Online*, vol.1 (June 2009), <http://ijas.iaas.ie>.
[87] Robert J. Savage, *A Loss of Innocence? Television and Irish Society, 1960-72* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2010), pp.164-5.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Richard Pine, *Music and Broadcasting in Ireland* (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2005), p.318; John Horgan, *Irish Media: A Critical History Since 1922* (Routledge, London, 2001), p.18.

travelling from elsewhere further limited 2RN's selections.[90] Luke Gibbons argues that while 'it is tempting to suggest that the media only reinforce those "traditions" which emanate from the heartlands of the culture industry… this does not happen as a matter of course.'[91] Instead, media does not simply transmit but actively transforms its content, both informing and reflecting social, political, and cultural change.

Gradually attitudes evolved and in the post-Second World War period interest in traditional and folk music increased across the western world, particularly among urban audiences. New, transportable recording technology also helped. A major turning point in Ireland came in 1947 when Radio Éireann director Robert Brennan appointed Outside Broadcast Officers, first Séamus Ennis and followed soon by Seán Mac Réamoinn and Prionsías Ó Conluain.[92] They took a Mobile Recording Unit to the Gaeltactaí and other rural areas to record traditional music on its own terms. Following in their footsteps, Ciarán Mac Mathúna had perhaps an even greater impact. He joined the station in 1954 and travelled around the country and the diaspora recording music and songs. He presented his programmes as informal house sessions, drawing listeners into the circle and ensuring that the music remained intimately connected to the musicians who played it. Music scholars debate the effects of the spread of mass media and lament its role in the disappearance of regional musical styles.[93] However, regardless of the speed at which this occurs or whether it is good or bad, those who lived through times of of economic malaise and poor transportation valued the exposure radio programmes offered to different styles from around the country and their presentation *in situ*.[94]

Musician and broadcaster Philip King compares Mac Mathúna's impact on Irish music to that of Alan Lomax on American music, saying '*thug siad an ceol ar*

[90] Nicholas Carolan, 'From 2RN to International Meta-Community: Irish National Radio and Traditional Music', *Journal of Music in Ireland* (Nov/Dec 2000); Pine, *Music and Broadcasting in Ireland*, pp.318-21.
[91] Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN, 1996), p.70.
[92] Previous to Ennis's appointment with RÉ he had done extensive collecting work for the Irish Folklore Commission. Ríonach Uí Ógáin (ed.), *Mise an Fear Ceoil: Séamus Ennis – Dialann Taistil, 1942-1946* (Cló Iar-Chonnachta, Indreabhán, Conamara, 2007); Ríonach Uí Ógáin (ed.), *Going to the Well for Water: The Séamus Ennis Field Diary, 1942-1946* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2010).
[93] Thérèse Smith, Micheál Ó Súilleabháin, Niall Keegan & Sandra Joyce (eds.), *Blas: The Local Accent in Irish Traditional Music*, Proceedings of Blas, the Local Accent Conference, Irish World Music Centre, University of Limerick (Folk Music Society of Ireland, Limerick & Dublin, 1997).
[94] Mac Mathúna's programmes included *Ceolta Tíre* (1955-1970), *A Job of Journeywork* (1957-1970), and *Mo Cheol Thú* (1970-2005).

ais go dtí na daoine trí mheán an raidío'.[95] Musicians who grew up in the 1950s and '60s speak fondly of his programmes and Jimmy Marshall tells an amusing anecdote:

> One time I was milking the cows with my mom. Ciarán Mac Mathúna… he went around the countryside collecting music, song, storytelling. He would come to Scartaglen; that would be the spot in our part of the county anyways… He used to record all this music and song and all that stuff and then he would play it as host of a radio show every Tuesday afternoon at seven o'clock. Getting back to milking a cow with my mom – we're milking the cows and I'm watching the clock, I know very well I won't have this cow milked, so I told my mom 'I'll see you later!' and I went back and gone into the house to listen to Ciarán Mac Mathúna! It was called *The Job of Journeywork* was the name of his show.

He appreciated the variety of traditional music styles the programmes featured while also emphasizing that Mac Mathúna knew of the value of music in Jimmy's own local community. Jimmy O'Brien, whose pub in Killarney Mac Mathúna visited, says, 'what Ciarán did, when he went around, he didn't go for the towns or the cities or anything, he went to the country places. He went where the rushes were the strongest… That's where the real music was gotten.' This illustrates a move away from the middle-class Gaelic League ethos of early 2RN programming.



Image 2.6: The Kilfenora Céilí Band, mid-1950s. They won the All-Ireland Céilí Band competition in 1954, '55 and '56. Photograph courtesy of Jerry Lynch.

[95] 'They brought the music back to the people through the medium of the radio.' Philip King, in *Mo Cheol Thú*, documentary film (RTÉ, Ireland, 2003).

The other form of musical culture that appears in interviewees' memories is the dance hall, which could feature 'modern' or céilí bands. Two contradictory factors contributed to the popularity of these venues: First was a craze for 'jazz' or 'modern' dancing, increasingly available via records and radio broadcasts.[96] In the early years of the Irish Free State, the Gaelic League and Catholic Church rallied against foreign imports of music, dancing, fashion, and other supposed symbols of moral laxity.[97] The second factor was the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935, which emerged from these campaigns and as a side effect pushed traditional music from private spaces into commercial halls. It stipulated that all such venues have a license, only obtainable from a district justice who evaluated the applicant's 'character'.[98] Failure to comply could result in prosecution. Though intended to target unlicensed commercial dance halls rather than house dances, many clergymen (often colluding with the gardaí) took matters into their own hands and 'misapplied' it in an uneven and inconsistent fashion.[99] Kevin Henry recalls being pulled by the ear out of an 'illegal' dance at the age of eight (c.1937) and the detrimental effect such measures had on informal fundraisers in his local community. The clergy realized that, if held in a parish hall, dances could have commercial value for the Church, while supervision might prevent immorality. Consequently, in the late 1930s a dance hall 'building boom' took place.[100] Country house dances had featured set dancing, but within parish halls the clergy promoted certain forms of 'Irish' dances, particularly what became known as céilí dancing, which the Gaelic League had developed in London in the late 1890s to serve large crowds and venues.[101] Parish dances in the 1950s featured céilí standards such as the 'Siege of Ennis' as well as waltzes, polkas,

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[96] Jerry Lynch mentioned listening to country and western and Scottish dance music, Mick Treacy spoke of hearing jazz, and Larry Reynolds listened to the American Forces Network and Radio Luxembourg during the Second World War.

[97] Mark Finnane, 'The Carrigan Committee of 1930-31 and the "Moral Condition of the Saorstát"', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol.32, no.128 (Nov. 2001), pp.519-36; Jim Smyth, 'Dancing, Depravity and All That Jazz: The Public Dance Halls Act of 1935', *History Ireland*, vol.1, no.2 (Summer 1993), pp.51-4; Duffy, 'Jazz, Identity and Sexuality in Ireland during the Interwar Years'.

[98] Irish Statute Book, 'Public Dance Halls Act, 1935' (accessed Jan. 2015) <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1935/en/act/pub/0002/print.html>.

[99] Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Dancing on the Hobs of Hell: Rural Communities in Clare and the Dance Halls Act of 1935', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, vol.9, no.4 (Winter 2005), pp.11-13.

[100] Ibid., p.17.

[101] Set dancing varies across the country, but generally features between one and four couples dancing a series of figures. It is more relaxed in appearance than céilí dancing or step dancing, where the dancer's body is held quite rigidly. John P. Cullinane, 'Irish Dance World-Wide: Irish Migrants and the Shaping of Traditional Irish Dance', in P. O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History, Heritage, Identity*, Vol.3, *The Creative Migrant* (Leicester University Press, London, 1994), p.197.

quicksteps, and foxtrots.[102] The prevalence of dance halls changed both dancing styles and musical forms, gradually contributing to the demise of house dances and the rise of céilí bands and showbands.

Céilí bands generally consisted of five to ten musicians, with a pianist and drummer backing a mix of melody instruments playing in unison. Seán Ó Riada disparaged the result, calling it 'a rhythmic but meaningless noise with as much relation to music as the buzzing of a bluebottle in an upturned jamjar.'[103] Despite his best efforts, céilí bands were here to stay, popularized by dance halls, radio broadcasts, and competitions. For musicians, the conditions in local halls could be less than ideal. Billy Clifford played with the Star of Munster céilí band from 1954 to '59 and says, 'a lot of parish halls… oh God, it would be the middle of the winter in these cold halls with no heat. I used to freeze to death, I'll always remember it, freeze to death. No joy there, I'll tell you.' Nonetheless, he speaks with pride of being asked to join the band at a young age and earning money doing so: 'I thought I was on top of the world with my ten shilling note!' Similar stories of poor conditions coupled with pleasure in public performance emerge from many musicians' accounts of the era.[104] Residents of larger towns had greater access to modern-style music and dance bands, though it seems the stereotype of immorality associated with them persisted. Sean Chamberlain says jokingly,

> Ireland in 1957 was a grim place – unless you played in a dance band and if you played in a dance band you were somebody to be avoided! [*Laughs*] Because all those guys who played in dance bands they were either alcoholics or sex maniacs or if they weren't they were sick from the two items I just spoke about. And I remember the bandmaster asking my mother would she buy a saxophone for me. He might has well have asked her to buy a machine gun. She associated saxophones with the people I told you about. And I suppose she was partly right.

His mother's perception of dance band musicians as a corrupting influence on her young son relates to the construction of jazz as foreign and immoral. Despite dire

[102] Julia Clifford, 'My Life and Music', *Sliabh Luachra: Journal of Cumann Luachra*, vol.1, no.4, June 1987, p.20; Jerry Lynch, interview with the author, 20 Nov. 2010; Kevin McDermott, interview with the author, 10 Dec. 2011.
[103] In Pine, *Music and Broadcasting in Ireland*, p.265.
[104] Kevin McDermott played with his uncle's band in rural Cavan and recalls 'in all those old dance halls it was lit by Tilley lamp and the amplifier, which was a real Mickey Mouse affair' with a microphone that oscillated between functioning and not. Nonetheless, upon being asked to do his first stint as a drummer with Eugene Liddy's Céilí Band he says, 'I was delighted. I got ten shillings. I was absolutely made up!'

warnings from authority figures in family, church, and government, thousands 'voted with their feet' and chose to keep 'dancing to the "jazz" tunes of modernity'.[105]



Image 2.7: The Popular Five dance band in Mitchelstown, Co. Cork in the 1950s. Left to right: Pa Duffy, TJ Hartigan, Sean Chamberlain (on saxophone), Charlie Sweeney, and Jimmy Walsh. Photograph courtesy of Sean Chamberlain.

A perceived decline in vernacular music practices inspired the foundation of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in 1951. Though established several decades after the Gaelic Revival, CCÉ's aims and structure have much in common with earlier organizations, including the Gaelic Athletic Association (founded 1884) and Gaelic League (founded 1893).[106] Its overall ethos exuded nationalism and conservatism, particularly in the early years. A letter announcing the publication of a new official organ in 1958 not only suggested that it promote Irish traditional music, but that this would create a moral bulwark against the forces of modernization:

> This is an era when misguided individuals and groups of individuals have persuaded themselves and seek to persuade others that by black magic and sorcery of some kind the wash-board and rolling-pin along with the witch's broom can be converted into musical instruments, whilst rock-and-rollers, which John McAdam intended for the leveling of highways, have crashed our dance halls. Therefore it is necessary and desirable that the plain facts

[105] Duffy, 'Jazz, Identity and Sexuality in Ireland during the Interwar Years'.
[106] P.J. Matthews, '"Vinyl Revival": Reflections on Irish Folk Music, 1951-1981', presented at New Voices conference, National University of Ireland Galway (6 June 2014); Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, 'Bunreacht' (2009).

> about these and similar matters should be set down in black and white so that such false notions may not be allowed to pervert the minds and hearts of our Irish youth in this complex world in which they have to live and work.[107]

Like Sean Chamberlain's mother, CCÉ deemed non-Irish, modern musical genres a threat to morality, though equating jazz with sorcery seems rather extreme.

Despite the official outlook, musicians in the 1950s found the annual All-Ireland *fleadh cheoil* (music festival organized by Comhaltas) exciting because it offered opportunities to hear and meet others from across the country. Cathal McConnell went to his first fleadh with his family in 1958. He recalls that at the time people did not travel much and going even eighty miles from Fermanagh to the venue in Longford 'was a big deal'. Nicky McAuliffe says that young people like himself 'started going to the fleadh cheoils [sic] and that opened up a whole wide field of music. Then you were seeing people for the first time you were hearing. They were like God appearing! I'll always remember seeing Sean Keane (Sean of the Chieftains) and Seamus Connolly and all those people… Those were our heroes.' Over time a debate has developed regarding the effect of competitions (the main purpose of the fleadh) on the standardization of musical styles. David Lloyd's argument that 'cultural nationalism requires a certain homogenization of affect', necessitating 'a considerable degree of stylistic uniformity', certainly seems to apply in this instance.[108] One music scholar has gone so far as to accuse Comhaltas of 'stylistic supremacism' in its exclusion of local idioms, particularly the Protestant singing tradition in Northern Ireland.[109] Its power over the portrayal of the tradition and the centralized and undemocratic control of the organization and its funding have also come under fire.[110] Nonetheless, in the 1950s it contributed to rejuvenating traditional music when its very existence seemed threatened.

In 1960 Seán Ó Riada, then director of music for the Abbey Theatre, went looking for a group of traditional musicians to perform for a play by Bryan

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[107] Typed letter from Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, 'Re: Ceilidhe Record', 24 Feb. 1958, Joe Burke Archive, Box 1, P86/A/5-8, NUIG.
[108] David Lloyd, *Ireland after History* (Cork University Press in association with Field Day, Cork, 1999), p.90.
[109] Fintan Vallely, *Tuned Out: Traditional Music and Identity in Northern Ireland* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2008), p.34.
[110] Rachel C. Fleming, 'Resisting Cultural Standardization: Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Revitalization of Traditional Music in Ireland', *Journal of Folklore Research*, vol.41, nos.2-3 (2004), pp.227-257; Edward O. Henry, 'Institutions for the Promotion of Indigenous Music: The Case for Ireland's Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann', *Ethnomusicology*, vol.33, no.1 (Winter 1989), pp.67-95; McCarthy, *Passing It On*, pp.135-6.

MacMahon.[111] Following that success, they coalesced into Ceoltóirí Chualann, which performed ensemble arrangements of traditional tunes and songs in a formal stage setting, giving the music the character of 'high art' and raising its status and public presence. When asked in a 1965 interview whether he had succeeded in this objective, Ó Riada responded, '*is dóigh liom go bhfuil ag éirí linn diaidh ar ndiaidh stair an cheoil traidisiúnta a fheabhsú beagáinín agus táim sásta toisc gur féidir rian ár saothair d'fheiscint ins na dreamanna nua atá ag tosnú.*'[112] The '*dreamanna nua*' ('new bands') included the Chieftains, comprised of many members of Ceoltóirí Chualann, and later the Bothy Band and others followed a similar model. Ó Riada's 1962 fourteen-part radio series *Our Musical Heritage* appraised the nature and development of Irish music, illustrated by examples, and furthered his goals. He asserted, 'let nobody say that our traditions are inferior to those of any other country. They are our traditions, and as such they suit us best.'[113] Though in 1965 he could not be sure of his success, time has proven the durability of his contributions.[114]

Unlike Comhaltas with its overt cultural nationalist aims, the folk revival grew out of a radical (generally left-wing) subculture in Britain and America that spread internationally. In 1960s Ireland it drew people who had not grown up with traditional music into its fold. Mick Daly from Cork city recalls, 'I suppose my whole baptism in music was working my way back from guitar and Bob Dylan to playing Irish music, you know. It happened that way.' He elaborates on his personal evolution:

> I fell in love with the guitar by looking at it – I saw it in the corner of a room one time when I was maybe ten or eleven and I started playing it when I was about thirteen or fourteen… Basically, I got a Bob Dylan song book, worked my way through that, listened to Dylan and Baez, went from there back into Old Time music (things like Dylan's first album where he had a lot of old blues and country blues stuff). I started listening to people like the Carter family, New Lost City Ramblers, Bill Monroe, people like that, that whole side of the revival and the American music at the time. And around the same time there would've been people playing Irish music that I would have come

[111] Tomás Ó Canainn, *Seán Ó Riada: His Life and Work* (Collins Press, Cork, 2003), pp.43-4.
[112] 'I suppose that we are succeeding, gradually improving the history of traditional music a little bit and I am happy that it's possible to see the path of our work in the new bands that are beginning.' Nollaig Ó Gadhra, '*Bímse ag Seinnt Ceoil*: A 1965 Interview with Seán Ó Riada', *Journal of Music in Ireland* (Nov./Dec. 2001). Translation by Sara Goek.
[113] Quoted in Pine, *Music and Broadcasting in Ireland*, p.261. Ó Riada's opinions in *Our Musical Heritage* have been interpreted as virulently nationalistic and defensive. Though he at times uses quite forceful language it can also be read as outward looking rather than insular.
[114] Ciaran Carson, 'In Praise of the Céilí Band', *The Journal of Music in Ireland* (Jan./Feb. 2008); Ó Canainn, *Seán Ó Riada*, p.84; Nuala O'Connor, *Bringing it all Back Home: The Influence of Irish Music* (BBC Books, London, 1991), pp.74-83; Pine, *Music and Broadcasting in Ireland*, pp.267-70.

> into contact with. Before that I wouldn't have had any contact with Irish music really. Basically I joined a ballad group, as they were called at the time, 1968, which was the time of the revival of songs by people like the Dubliners, Clancy Brothers, Wolfe Tones, all that kind of thing, the whole 'ballad boom' as they called it at the time. There was a lot of work in pubs, so I just joined a group doing that kind of stuff.

He then met traditional musicians living around Cork, including Tomás Ó Canainn and Ben Lennon, both interviewed for this research. Mick's trajectory from folk to its roots was not unusual. The revival in Ireland started somewhat later than those in America and Britain and benefitted from the groundwork laid there (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). Mick never emigrated, but his music still reflects the influence of migration and transnational cultural currents. 'Don't forget now that when I came to Dublin' from Ahascragh, Co. Galway in 1955, recalls Martin Niland, 'you came into a pub and there'd be a notice up half the size of that thing there "singing strictly prohibited" and if you sang you were out the door, there was no two ways about it.' By 1962 the Dubliners sang regularly in O'Donoghue's pub on Merion Row, a sign of changing times.

The continuation of house dances and private music making well into the 1960s in some areas suggests that both the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935 and broadcast media had less of an immediate, catastrophic effect than sometimes assumed. Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin called the former 'a source of upheaval' and 'rupture' in traditional cultural practices.[115] However, his view may give one piece of legislation too much credit and it oversimplifies a multi-faceted narrative of the ebb and flow of tradition. Legislation, technology, urbanization, revivalist impulses, and transnational ties combined to shape processes of gradual social and cultural change, opening new opportunities for the performance and transmission of musical traditions. Comhaltas, the folk revival, and high profile groups such as the Dubliners and the Chieftains all brought Irish music into the public eye, raising its profile in urban centres, where previously some frowned upon it, and in its rural strongholds. The oral histories in this study refer to music and dancing both in private houses and

[115] Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Dancing on the Hobs of Hell', p.18. Junior Crehan gave the Public Dance Halls Act a similar status (perhaps the source of Ó hAllmhuráin's conclusions), saying, 'the Act banned the house dances and anyone holding such a dance after this was brought to Court and fined. The clergy started to build the parochial halls to which all were expected to go and the Government collected 25% of the ticket-tax. In these halls modern dance bands played a different type of music for a different style of dancing… But country people found it hard to adjust and to them the dance halls were not natural places of enjoyment; they were not places for traditional music, story-telling and dancing; they were unsuitable for passing on traditional arts. The Dance Hall Act had closed our schools of tradition and left us poorer people.' In 'Junior Crehan Remembers', p.75.

public venues, suggesting that in the mid-twentieth century they coexisted and even complemented each other. Migrants carried these practices with them to communities abroad where they adapted them and their meanings to serve new needs, as discussed in the following two chapters.

III. Emigration, 1945-70

In June 2012 Danny Meehan recalled his decision to leave Donegal in 1957 in the following way: 'Well, when you're becoming a man and you haven't got a proper bicycle and you can't afford a bike and there was no money. I didn't have to go. I was looking forward [to it]. The world's your oyster at sixteen. Freedom. People emigrate not just for any particular reason, because the whole world is out there.' He begins by suggesting the centrality of economic factors and then declares, 'I didn't have to go'. This seems particularly powerful in the context of his family's circumstances: they had twenty-five acres of mountainous land and all but one of the eleven children migrated at some stage. Nonetheless, though Danny mentions economic conditions – 'there was no money' – he chooses to emphasize his own agency, growing into manhood and desiring to see the world.

Historians have tended to view Irish migration in economic and demographic terms, generalizing migrants' characteristics and focusing on departure or arrival without recognizing both as part of the same process, a process that neither begins nor ends with the 'event'. Instead, the personal act of emigration initiated a series of transnational movements and ties, built upon those of previous generations. Focus on economic factors also leads to its characterization as 'involuntary': this logic says that if these men and women lacked viable employment at home, what 'choice' did they have? And yet if so many migrants felt forced to depart, historians might expect to find stories replete with blame for the government or the former British regime. Instead, Sean Ó Ciaráin writes, 'in my experience emigration caused no great bitterness in the people's minds. It was accepted as a fact of life.'[116] This statement applies to the interviews conducted for my research: they may have wished circumstances had allowed them to remain, but they expressed no blame or anger for their departure.

The biographical approach to migration outlined in the first section of the chapter highlights the need to explore the complex relationship between internal and

[116] Ó Ciaráin, *Farewell to Mayo*, p.59.

external factors in migration without isolating them.[117] External factors include the economy, politics and society and internal factors comprise aspects of individual agency and familial influence; both are deeply intertwined in life stories.[118] Within oral testimonies the historical context of economic malaise and conservatism often forms a primary or background rationale for migration, but it is rarely the only reason given and it is inseparable from personal or socio-cultural factors. As the Commission on Emigration acknowledged in 1954, 'while the fundamental cause of emigration is economic, in most cases the decision to emigrate cannot be ascribed to any single motive, but to the interplay of a number of motives'.[119] Each interviewee has a unique story and overall they support the conclusion that 'it takes more than just the lure of money to uproot oneself from one's home and culture'.[120] Reflecting on the experience as part of their life stories, many seek to make sense of migration through the interplay of various reasons: the presence of family members abroad, influence of peers, the planning (or lack of planning) that went into the decision, or a desire for adventure.

One other issue crucial to understanding oral testimony is the current situation of the subjects. In this research most were over sixty years of age at the time of the interview and they reflect on their lives and departures more than forty years earlier. The degree of satisfaction they feel with their life course overall can influence the stories they tell.[121]Personal narratives thus add both greater complexity and clarity to our understanding of migration. This section highlights the multifaceted nature of individual experiences and rationales given for the decision to leave Ireland, because, as Danny said, 'people emigrate not just for any particular reason'. For each person, many factors intertwined and these are situated within their individual, familial, and cultural contexts.

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[117] Enda Delaney & Donald MacRaild, 'Introduction' in E. Delaney & D. MacRaild (eds.), *Irish Migration, Networks and Ethnic Identities Since 1750* (Routledge, New York, 2007), pp.276-97; Angela McCarthy, *Personal Narratives of Irish and Scottish Migration, 1921-65* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2007), p.37.

[118] Catríona Ní Laoire, '"Settling Back?" A Biographical and Life-Course Perspective on Ireland's Recent Return Migration', *Irish Geography*, vol.41, no.2 (July 2008), pp.197-8.

[119] Commission on Emigration, *Reports*, p.134.

[120] Linda Dowling Almeida, *Irish Immigrants in New York City, 1945-1995* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2001), p.34.

[121] Louise Ryan, 'Passing Time: Irish Women Remembering and Re-Telling Stories of Migration to Britain', in K. Burrell & P. Panayi (eds.), *Histories and Memories: Migrants and their History in Britain* (Tauris Academic Studies, London & New York, 2006), pp.207-8.

In telling their stories, migrants navigate the waters of collective memory, adapting or disassociating themselves from established narratives. Brian Behan demonstrates this process, referencing a traditional song when recounting his departure:

> For hundreds of years prime cattle and mature men have been Ireland's chief export to England. The old Irish song tells us to –
>
> "Go seek your fortune darlin' in the land across the sea for in Paddy's land but poverty you'll find."
>
> But then, no young man or woman is sorry to go. The only ones I ever saw weeping were those left behind… I tried to feel sad that I was leaving my haunts behind, but I didn't, and then I felt ashamed because I didn't. Then I got fed up feeling ashamed and wished to Christ that the bloody boat would push off and let me get to hell out of here.[122]

He grapples with his feelings about leaving. Unwillingness to accept the song's idiom of emigration-as-lament elicits pangs of guilt and frustration. In contrast, John B. Keane chose to accept the standard cultural script of loss and sadness:

> Dun Laoghaire, for the first time, was a heartbreaking experience – the goodbyes to husbands going back after Christmas, chubby-faced boys and girls leaving home for the first time, bewilderment written all over them, hard-faced old-stagers who never let on but who felt it the worst of all because they knew only too well what lay before them…
>
> All around us as we left Dun Laoghaire, there was drunkenness. The younger men were drunk – not violently so but tragically so, as I was, to forget the dreadful loneliness of having to leave home. Underneath it all was the heart-breaking, frightful anguish of separation.[123]

Tragedy was, perhaps, the simplest way of interpreting the experience, given its presence in collective memory, such as emigration ballads.[124] However, to reduce all post-war migration to that narrative would be to miss its diversity, the discrepancies between reality and representation, and the myriad ways in which migrants positioned themselves in relation to the past.

The two biographical case studies in the final section of this chapter challenge the theoretical perspectives and rigid dichotomies of economic/non-economic and voluntary/involuntary reasons often emphasized in historical works. Individual case studies, rather than impeding generalization, gives depth to it. They add to our understanding of personal and collective memory and the processes by

[122] Behan, *With Breast Expanded*, p.95. The song quoted is 'The Little Old Mud Cabin on the Hill' (traditional), which is about the sadness of emigration.
[123] John B. Keane, *Self-Portrait* (Mercier Press, Cork, 1964), pp.32-3.
[124] Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.3.

which they are created. These stories illustrate the necessity of reading the 'migration event' within its broader historical, familial, and biographical contexts.

Biographical Case Studies

Jimmy O'Brien is a singer and publican from near Killarney, Co. Kerry. He emigrated in 1956 and spent five years in New York working on the docks. He and his wife then saw a pub advertised for sale on College Street in Killarney, bought it, and returned in 1961. At the time of the interview in April 2012 he was about eighty years of age and still in business at the same location, known his love and support of traditional music and the GAA (he has since retired and the pub changed ownership). When asked 'why did you leave?' he recalled:

> When I grew up then I served my time, I moved into Killarney working, which was six miles, and I served my time as a mechanic and when I was finished I went to America. In the meantime, I was only nineteen that time, in between I had met a very nice young girl and the joy and pride of my life. Unfortunately she passed away eighteen years ago. She was a trainee nurse and she qualified and I qualified as a mechanic and we both went to America. I worked in my trade over and Mary did likewise.

Notice that he does not say he had no work in Ireland. However, it is likely that after his apprenticeship, when he had 'served his time' as a mechanic, he found it difficult to get a steady job in that trade.[125] The fact that he trained in a trade also differentiates him from his father's occupation as an agricultural labourer. However, social relationships complicate this story: he met the woman who would be his wife and they went to America together. He does not detail Mary's precise influence, but clearly their relationship affected the decision.

When asked how he travelled to America, Jimmy replied:

> Well I'll tell you, I'll be honest with you, I didn't have any money. I'd be here still only if somebody paid my passage to America. I went out by Pan-American Airways, Pan-Am. I'll always think of the plane, I think it had to land in Gander to refuel or something. You'd never think of a crash or anything when you'd be young, you know. I think it was arriving into, 'twas Idlewild Airport at the time (it's now Kennedy), when I looked out the plane was coming down and to see acres and acres of cars and all the different colours, I think it was fascinating.

[125] Contemporary observers noted that even those who earned qualifications in a trade in Ireland found it difficult to enter employment there. The president of the Cork Chamber of Commerce said in November 1949: 'Ministers had deplored the lack of skilled tradesmen in the building industry, but it should be realized that most of these trades were closed and the ministers were making no effort to remedy that state of affairs. No boy who was not an immediate relative of a tradesman would be accepted as an apprentice in most trades and this was seriously affecting the general position. This situation was repugnant to the Constitution.' In Garvin, *News from a New Republic*, p.118.

> SARA: You mentioned you had cousins in Chicago, so why did you end up in New York?
>
> JIMMY: I had a lot of cousins in Chicago. The person that took me out… Somebody had to sponsor you that time, you couldn't just go, they had to sponsor you, so the man that sponsored me was a neighbour and he was in New York and I got work in New York right away so I didn't bother going out to the cousins. I met a few of them alright. I was happy where I was but I still didn't like it. I worked down on the docks in New York. You wouldn't meet many Irish down there, but 'twas grand.

In this excerpt, economics again appear at the forefront: he did not have money so a neighbour of the family's from Kerry paid for his passage and got him a job. However, saying 'I'd be here still only if somebody paid my passage' suggests migration was not necessarily inevitable. His recollection of the plane journey and first sight of New York also draws attention to the sense of adventure that many young, rural migrants must have felt, the novelty of seeing so many cars and the 'fascination' because of the vast differences in lifestyle between the two countries.[126] The aspect of his story relating to familial and social networks is also significant: at this time restrictions in the US meant that new immigrants required sponsorship. As he said, 'you couldn't just go'; there was paperwork involved. In addition, the cost of travel featured in the decision-making process and these factors meant most immigrants went to family members initially. Jimmy's sponsor was a neighbour, not kin, but nonetheless an individual connected to his family in Ireland.

The experience had pros and cons and Jimmy evaluates it from the perspective of his current circumstances, hinting at a sense of ambivalence. Asked 'were you excited when you went over first?' he responded:

> I was looking forward to it, yeah. I still had an awful liking for where I [came from], I was lonesome leaving because I was leaving nothing but I was still lonesome but I was hoping some day that I'll go back, you know. So I made it back and I'm still here, waiting now 'til the man above takes me. We had plain sailing to America and coming home we'd no stop but I'm afraid when I'll be leaving this world I'll have a few pit stops before I reach the promised land! I'll be hauled in a few times! I had a very enjoyable life.

Jimmy acknowledges the sadness of emigrating, but ultimately is satisfied with his life; he may not be wealthy, but he and his wife earned enough in their years in America to purchase the pub and the accommodation above it. He talks freely about the good times he had growing up, the rich cultural traditions despite poor living conditions, and how they looked forward to the long winter's nights because that is

[126] Almeida suggests these types of observations feature frequently in migrant testimonies of the era. *Irish Immigrants in New York City*, p.27.

when the most music and dancing would happen. Of his years in America he recalls house sessions, dances, and watching hurling and football matches at Gaelic Park on Sundays. In the fifty years since his return, numerous excellent musicians and others visited and played in his pub, including radio broadcaster Ciarán Mac Mathúna and the Chieftains, and their pictures and items of local interest fill its walls. As Jimmy says, 'I had a very enjoyable life'. We must view his depiction of emigration in that context.

The second case study is husband and wife, Martin and Teresa McMahon. Martin's maternal grandparents raised him in west Clare while his parents lived and worked in England. He joined them in London in 1958 at age sixteen. Teresa comes from south Tipperary and she went to England with her father in 1957 and they brought the rest of the family over a couple years later. Martin and Teresa married in 1963, spent much of their lives working as a professional musical duo called The Caravelles, and returned to live in Clare in 1998. Martin describes his childhood and emigration:

> My parents went to England, well I'm sixty-eight now, so my parents went to England when I was about four, had to go. Nothing, absolutely nothing in Ireland, so I was reared with my grandparents. When I left school, you left school that time at fourteen, so I did a year in the technical school, which made me fifteen and then I went to England and started to work there. I was serving my time as a carpenter.

Martin outwardly fits the general profile of migrants in this period as young, rural, and single, but to data collectors the fact that he went to join his parents would probably be invisible.[127] Like Jimmy, he trained in a trade, carpentry, and he uses the same word to describe Ireland, 'nothing'. While this absence may be partly economic, 'nothing' is a much starker choice of words than simply 'no work' or 'no money'.

Teresa (née Britton) also went to London with her family, but under different circumstances. She and her father made the journey first and her mother and the other seven children joined them a couple years later:

> TERESA: I first went to London in 1957 with my father. We stayed there for nearly two years and left my mother and the other seven here in Ireland. Then we came back, him and I, and in 1960 all the family left. Sorry, I beg your pardon, 1958, all the family left and my parents are buried in England.
>
> MARTIN: Your father was sixty then, wasn't he?

[127] Enda Delaney, *Irish Emigration since 1921* (Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, Dublin, 2002), pp.12-13.

> TERESA: He was, yeah.
>
> MARTIN: Wasn't he old to emigrate?
>
> TERESA: I wouldn't mind but he had a very bad disease because he had coal dust on the lungs, but he went over to England and he went out working on the buildings. What could he do? He had a big family and that's the way it was. But he was a very happy man.

Elsewhere in the interview she described her family trying to find accommodation for eight children as 'horrific, even in London'. It defies the generalizations of demographers in many regards: though they came from a rural area her father was not a farmer, but a coal miner; he was sixty years old, past the prime of his working life; and they migrated as a large family, with the youngest children still in school. Teresa's migration constituted part of the family's survival strategy. She describes her father as a 'happy man', suggesting that as a family they coped and tried to make the best of their circumstances despite the hardships. Lambert asserts in her book *Irish Women in Lancashire* that men tended to migrate for economic reasons and women for social or familial reasons, but she makes that statement based on analysis only of women's testimonies.[128] Examining a broader range of oral histories suggests that in fact any individual could leave for social or economic reasons or a combination of them and while patterns of gender difference may exist, this type of generalization falls flat.

For the McMahons and Jimmy O'Brien, over time processes of migration could fracture or re-constitute a family, or both.[129] Martin grew up separated from his parents and through his own migration they reunited. Teresa's whole family gradually re-established itself in London, but not all felt comfortable settling there:

> Two of my brothers in particular… they hated it, they just hated the place. They did not like [it], but of course you can't blame them, they were going to school and they had Irish accents and all this kind of things and things weren't great at the time. They said 'when we leave school, we'll never live here' and they emigrated to Australia, which obviously is quite a long way away, which means my nieces and nephews and that are over there. Then, my parents are buried in England and I'm living here [in Ireland] now. And I've got a sister in England and we have a daughter and she's in England. From the emigration here so much, and not just ourselves, I speak on behalf of heaven knows how many people, there's a sad side to it, there's breakups all over the place.

While migration had the short-term effect of keeping her family together, in the long term it contributed to their separation. Feeling like they did not belong in England,

[128] Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, pp.15-29.
[129] Ryan, 'Family Matters', p.361.

her brothers chose to go to Australia. Teresa's own return to Ireland separated her from her sister and daughter. Though many migrants shared the pain of rupture, they experienced it on a very personal level.

With hindsight, Martin and Teresa compare life in Ireland to that available in England:

> MARTIN: To be quite honest, I'm talking personally now, I thought I would never see Ireland again and I never wanted to. The memories are too bad and they're still with me. They're with you as well. Bad, bad memories. Nothing at all. A boiled egg was a luxury before we left. Can you imagine that? You went to England with an empty pocket. You had a job within a week.
>
> TERESA: You had, and you had nice food. That might sound crazy.
>
> MARTIN: And you had money. You might be staying in a bad old room, no heating, nothing, but it was still better than nothing! It was still better than Ireland because you had nothing in Ireland. You had no plugs, you plugged into the light to do the ironing and all that, there was no plugs in the walls, England wasn't rich by any means, for the working class anyway.

Again, Martin emphasizes the word 'nothing' in his description of Ireland and here it clearly applies to more than employment; Teresa mentions food and Martin electricity. These are material goods, but basic ones. Though post-war London was hardly a paradise, it compared favourably to poverty in rural Ireland.

However, as in Jimmy O'Brien's case, the McMahons are returned migrants. They spent four decades in London and economically their story is one of success. Most of my interviewees are musicians, but few made a living playing music. The McMahons did and they saved enough for a house and comfortable retirement in Clare. Nonetheless, the words and tone of voice they used in the quotations above suggests that they remain somewhat unsettled and this influences their perceptions of both Ireland and England. They made a life for themselves in London and admit to being happy there, but eventually they felt the Irish community aging and dispersing, leaving them isolated. They returned to Ireland hoping to make a new life, despite the fact that neither had any surviving family there. Instead, the overall sense from the three-hour interview is one of dislocation. They do not idealize the Ireland of their childhood; in fact they present quite a negative image (Martin more so than Teresa). Without doubting the reality of that poverty, current dissatisfaction may also shape the depiction. A study of older Irish migrants in London found that 'an interesting consistent thread in the interviews was the ambivalence of many informants towards Ireland': they describe it as a land devoid of promise, and yet

one to which they retain a 'resilient attachment'.[130] The McMahons' idea of Ireland seems in line with that finding. They were not so bitter that they refused to come back. They returned hoping to find some of the positive aspects of their memories, particularly a strong sense of community, and instead felt that more than just the economy had changed in the intervening years.

From the perspective of the present, some migrants like Jimmy O'Brien express satisfaction with the course their lives took after emigration, while others like Martin and Teresa McMahon retain a sense of ambivalence. Jimmy's relatively short time abroad and five decades of working life since return may contribute to his more sanguine views (see Chapter 5 on return migration). While these are only two examples, analysis of all my interviews (without making a claim to complete representativeness) suggests that individuals happy with their current situation tend to speak about their departure forty, fifty, or sixty years ago in factual, neutral, or even positive terms, whereas those dissatisfied in the present emphasize the more negative aspects of that experience. This stresses the need to view migration situated wholly within the overall life story. Enda Delaney writes that 'the personal testimonies of migrants who left in the 1940s and 1950s emphasize the involuntary nature of this exodus'.[131] Whether historians consider post-war migration voluntary or involuntary, analysing the narratives themselves from a biographical perspective suggests a conclusion more akin to that Angela McCarthy reaches: individuals do not like to see their lives as the products of forces completely outside their control and instead they construct their memories to make sense of those forces in personal terms.[132] Piaras Mac Éinrí writes that 'people don't want to see themselves as victims – that's only human. But we can't rejoice in any unwished-for departure, nor should the effects of such high emigration, notably in rural Ireland, be forgotten.'[133] Though

[130] Gerard Leavey, Sati Sembhi & Gill Livingstone, 'Older Irish Migrants Living in London: Identity, Loss and Return', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.30, no.4 (July 2004), p.776.
[131] Enda Delaney, 'Transnationalism, Networks and Emigration from Post-War Ireland', in Delaney & MacRaild (eds.), *Irish Migration, Networks and Ethnic Identities Since 1750*, p.277. He later acknowledges the importance of individual agency, but suggests migrants themselves do not emphasize it (p.278). He cites published collections of testimonies: Lennon, McAdam & O'Brien, *Across the Water*; Lynch, *The Irish in Exile*; Anne O'Grady, *Irish Migration to London in the 1940s and 1950s* (London, 1988); Pam Schweitzer, *Across the Irish Sea: Memories of London Irish Pensioners* (Age Exchange, London, 1989).
[132] McCarthy, *Personal Narratives of Irish and Scottish Migration*, p.61.
[133] Piaras Mac Éinrí, 'Noonan admits some people are "forced to emigrate"', *Irish Times*, 19 Sept. 2014.

the government was no doubt implicated in the massive scale of emigration in the post-war era, it rarely features in narratives. Instead, migrants foreground individual agency in describing the decision-making process. Their narratives defy simple theoretical characterizations as economic or non-economic, voluntary or involuntary, individual or structural, personal or familial: in each biography a multitude of rationales intertwine.

Overall, case studies such as these demonstrate how oral histories can lead to a re-evaluation the process of migration in Irish historical study. This chapter makes four key contributions to the study of Irish migration in the post-war era: First, utilizing life stories highlights the importance of Ireland and an Irish childhood as a source of migrants' values and identity, as well as an explanation for the course their lives took. Second, these sources point to the weaknesses of studies that rely predominantly on demography or official publications. Statistics oversimplify while public discourses may be at odds with reality, drawing instead on a range of cultural tropes. Detailed analysis of individuals, by contrast, points to an underlying complexity, adding depth to our understanding of both them and their social groups. This relates to the third contribution, which is in demonstrating the contingency of migration. The decision to leave depended on the confluence of multiple factors, personal, familial, and societal. This contingency and the importance of individual rationales make it impossible to create a taxonomy of reasons for emigration. Fourth, detailed life story analysis demonstrates the significance of the ways in which people tell their stories and the need to account for current circumstances. The following chapters examine the migrants' experiences and musical cultures in the two premier sites of settlement, the United States and Great Britain.

Chapter 3

'On the Shores of Amerikay'

On the eve of his departure for New York in 1955, Jimmy O'Brien followed a tradition established at least a century earlier: he had an American wake. These events got their name from a death ceremony, because, like the deceased, migrants destined for America in the nineteenth century rarely returned.[1] Though tinged with sorrow, the parties generally featured drinking, singing, and dancing.[2] Jimmy recalls,

> They had porter and all for me. 'Twas only, I remember it very well. Paddy [Cronin] went down to Shannon with me. 'Twas Paddy's seventieth birthday there some few years ago and I was at Paddy's seventieth birthday and he told me a part of that night that I didn't remember, natural enough. He said that morning before I left, and it went on all night, dancing, the empty barrel was shoved out on the floor and they put me standing up on the barrel. I never knew about it. And they made me sing, [*sings*]
>
> I'm bidding farewell to the land of my youth
> And the home that I love so well
> To the mountains grand o'er my own native land
> I am bidding them all farewell
> With an aching heart I am bidding adieu
> For tomorrow I'm going away
> For to seek a home for my true love
> On the shores of Amerikay.
>
> I didn't sing it since! That was my own stag party or hen party or whatever it was. I'd never heard of a hen party that time though. The word stag party wasn't either. The American wake was. I don't think there was too many handkerchiefs taken out after me at all! There wasn't anyone crying. When you'd be young I suppose your father and mother would be, but they wouldn't let on.[3]

Jimmy's American wake had the same hallmarks as those in the previous century according to literary and folklore sources:[4] it went on all night on the eve of his journey; ballads of parting, loneliness, and emigrant hardships commonly featured between the dances; and in a tradition known as the 'convoy' friends accompanied

[1] The estimated return rate for late nineteenth century migrants to the US is about ten percent, much lower than other European migrant groups. Marjolein 'T Hart, 'Irish Return Migration in the Nineteenth Century', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, vol.76, no.3 (1985), p.224.
[2] Arnold Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration, 1850-1900* (Dufour Editions, Chester Springs, PA, 1997), pp.87-93.
[3] 'The Shores of Amerikay' is a traditional song. See Appendix 4 for full lyrics.
[4] 'Questionnaire: Emigration to America', NFC UCD; Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, pp.91-2; Patrick Duffy, 'Literary Reflections on Irish Migration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' in R. King, J. Connell & P. White (eds.), *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration* (Routledge, London & New York, 1995), p.21.

him to his point of departure (an airport rather than a railway station as in earlier years).

A man interviewed in Galway about customs surrounding emigration before 1900, recounted:

> The wake consisted of singing and dancing and drinking. Tea was also served. If there was a barn, the dance was held in it, otherwise it was held in the kitchen. The man of the house would provide a half-barrell [sic] of stout. Many songs were sung during the night, and the last song was always 'The Shores of Americay,' which was always given by the boy or girl going away if they were able to sing.[5]

His description, given in 1955 but relating to the late nineteenth century, shows remarkable similarity to Jimmy's American wake, which took place that same year. The songs sung on these occasions tended to centre on the themes of sorrow and loss, 'a lively or rollicking song was never sung'.[6] In 'The Shores of Amerikay' the singer expresses sadness at leaving his homeland and friends and regret that he may die far away where 'no fond mother's tears will be shed o'er my grave'. He says he goes not for 'employment' or 'fame', 'but to seek a home for my own true love', combining hope of having a life that he wants with the sorrow of parting.[7] In reality, migrants departed for any or all of these reasons. Though Jimmy jokes about the lack of tears, leaving saddened him. He had the good fortune to both follow his love to 'the shores of Amerikay' and eventually return to the land of his youth. The singing of this song at an American wake in Kerry in 1955 and its particular association with that custom illustrates one of the ways in which post-war migrants positioned themselves in relation to the past. This chapter argues that negotiating pre-existing narratives and conceptions about America, Ireland, and the Irish shaped the experiences, memories, and identities of the post-war migrant generation.

In American immigration history, the Irish feature prominently in discussions of the nineteenth century because of the Famine and waves of migrants associated with it. However, by the mid-twentieth century they no longer counted among the most numerous immigrant streams and consequently when discussed it tends to be as a multi-generational ethnic group.[8] New Irish arrivals in the post-war era barely get a

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[5] Martin Tarpey (age 65 in 1955, resident in Lackaghbeg, Turloughmore, Co. Galway), information collected by Ciarán Bairéad, 'Questionnaire: Emigration to America', NFC UCD.
[6] John O'Keeffe (from Co. Waterford, left Ireland in 1907), 'Questionnaire: Emigration to America', NFC UCD.
[7] Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, p.99.
[8] This is true of most essays in James S. Rogers & Matthew J. O'Brien (eds.), *After the Flood: Irish America 1945-1960* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin & Portland, OR, 2009).

mention and this area of study requires more attention.[9] 'In the postwar era,' writes Kevin Kenny, 'the history of the American Irish was a history concerned not with immigrants so much as with established members of the ethnic group, from the second generation and beyond.'[10] J.J. Lee's introduction to *Making the Irish-American* and Lawrence McCaffrey's *The Irish Diaspora in America* both largely dismiss the post-war generation, using its reduced scale to excuse the elision.[11] While this is somewhat understandable, that scale also makes them interesting in their own right. Rather than new migrants dominating the Irish ethnic group – as they did in America during the Famine decade and in Britain in the 1950s – they were marginalized within it. Consequently, they had to negotiate not only American society, but also Irish-American society and the norms and expectations it had developed over the course of its history. Timothy Meagher argues that perhaps the most striking feature of Irish immigrant life in the mid-twentieth century was 'their irrelevance to Irish America'[12]: dwarfed amid the greater numbers of American-born Irish, it was those who largely defined the ethnic group. However, as this chapter shows, the new migrant generation actively challenged established definitions and played formative roles in the new ideas of Irishness that emerged.

This chapter focuses on the social milieu post-war migrants encountered in the cities of Boston, New York, and Chicago, with occasional reference to others. The locations where my interviewees settled and for which extant oral history collections exist dictate this emphasis. While the Irish populations in these urban centres have received scholarly attention, monographs that address a particular city often neglect important comparative dimensions.[13] Their musical cultures have also been studied, but primarily from an ethnomusicological perspective: Lawrence McCullough and Mick Moloney's writings have weaknesses when it comes to

[9] Kevin Kenny, *New Directions in Irish-American History* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2003), p.245.
[10] Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (Longman, Harlow, England & New York, 2000), p.221.
[11] J.J. Lee, introduction to J.J. Lee & M.R. Casey (eds.), *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York University Press, New York, 2006), p.36; Lawrence McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1976), pp.152-3.
[12] Timothy Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2005), p.130.
[13] City-specific studies include: Almeida, *Irish Immigrants in New York City*; Ronald H. Bayor & Timothy J. Meagher (eds.), *The New York Irish* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996); Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia*; Lawrence McCaffrey, et al. *The Irish in Chicago* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana & Chicago, 1987); Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (Back Bay Books, Boston, 1995).

historical context, change over time, and the post-war era, generally skipping from the 'golden age' in the early twentieth century to the revival in the 1970s.[14] Rebecca Miller and Susan Gedutis's work have filled in many of these gaps, but they centre on individual cities (New York and Boston respectively) without recognition of how those places varied from others.[15] Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin examines four cities between 1945 and 1960, but he groups together locations where the music scene evolved on different trajectories and his short article leaves little room for in-depth analysis.[16] In addition, successful, high-profile Irish migrants and their descendants receive the most popular attention, marginalizing the voices of the 'ordinary' working people or those who 'failed' at achieving the American dream.[17] My research makes a significant contribution by analyzing the music's historical context, geographical comparisons, and its relationship to the musicians' everyday lives, experiences of migration, and identities.

I. Preconceptions

The tradition of migration from Ireland to the United States since the colonial era meant that long before they embarked on a journey, migrants had ideas and expectations about their destination and its people. Kevin Henry encountered such attitudes as he prepared for departure:

> 'Twas a part of tradition in Ireland to say goodbye to the neighbours. That went back on account of no return, if you know what I mean. It still prevailed in my day; you had to do the rounds of the village. I had one experience, funny. I went to one woman and I'd never see her again. I said to her 'I'm going away.' 'Where are you going, *a grá*?' I said, 'I'm going to America.' 'You are?' she said, 'you know something, you're doing the right thing, you worked long enough!' That was the answer I got from her. Another one said 'go to America where you'll be clean and decent.' That was the outlook of people that never left.

The custom of saying goodbye to friends, relatives, and neighbours before leaving was often part of the American wake, because, as Kevin suggests, few who went

[14] Lawrence E. McCullough, 'An Historical Sketch of Traditional Irish Music in the U.S.', *Folklore Forum*, vol.7, no.3 (1974), pp.177-191; Lawrence E. McCullough, 'Irish Music in Chicago: An Ethnomusicological Study' (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1978); Moloney, 'Irish Music in America'.
[15] Rebecca Miller, '"Our Own Little Isle": Irish Traditional Music in New York', *New York Folklore*, vol.14, nos.3-4 (1988), pp.101-15; Rebecca Miller, 'Irish Traditional and Popular Music in New York City: Identity and Social Change, 1930-1975', in Bayor & Meagher (eds.), *The New York Irish*, pp.481-507; Susan Gedutis, *See You at the Hall: Boston's Golden Era of Irish Music and Dance* (Northeastern University Press, Boston, 2004).
[16] Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Dance Halls of Romance and Culchies in Tuxedos: Irish Traditional Music in America in the 1950s', in Rogers & O'Brien (eds.), *After the Flood*, pp.9-23.
[17] Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History*, pp.126-7.

ever returned. The opinions his neighbours expressed in 1953 would fit comfortably in folklore material related to the late nineteenth century.[18] In areas like rural Co. Mayo where Kevin grew up, a long history of high emigration rates shaped prevailing images of America as a land of plenty where the Irish could live among their own, practice their religion, and send money home to their families.

The continued reception of letters, parcels, and remittances in the mid-twentieth century reinforced these views.[19] One person recalled, 'even the time of the war it was great, the people in America would send home tea to us, I remember the parcels coming. "The parcels from America," everyone was shouting and there'd be tea in it, tea was scarce.'[20] Another said people believed 'everybody in America was well off – and we thought she [an aunt] was well off because she used to send parcels all the time. We always had beautiful clothes.'[21] However, Kerby Miller argues that even material evidence of wealth fails to fully explain the persistence of perceptions of America as a land of plenty. He suggests these beliefs 'enabled emigrants and others to adopt explanatory strategies that deflected personal responsibility, obscured social conflicts, and relieved psychological tensions.'[22] Matthew O'Brien contends that many in Ireland saw through the positive images presented in the 'American letter' and charged them with the 'sin of omission'.[23] Nonetheless, imagining a land of promise across the Atlantic may have helped migrants and their families overcome reluctance or bitterness at departure and reflected their aspirations.[24]

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[18] 'Questionnaire: Emigration to America', NFC UCD; Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*; Matthew O'Brien, 'Whither Tir na nÓg? Irish Images of Emigration and America in the 1950s', paper presented at the American Conference for Irish Studies (Chicago, April 2013).

[19] Bernadette Whelan, 'The "Idea of America" in the New Irish State, 1922-1960', in D.T. Gleeson (ed.), *The Irish in the Atlantic World* (University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC, 2010), p.83; Almeida, *Irish Immigrants in New York City*, p.34.

[20] LHArchiveA45 (male, born before 1935), Life Histories and Social Change in 20th Century Ireland, IQDA.

[21] B12 (female, born between 1945 and 1954), Life Histories, IQDA. For examples of similar views see: A45 (male, born before 1935), Life Histories, IQDA; A29 (female, born before 1935), Life Histories, IQDA; Hain William, Bean Uí Mhurchú, in Ní Shúilleabháin (ed.), *Bibeanna*, p.66.

[22] Kerby A. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration* (Field Day, Dublin, 2008), p.108.

[23] Schrier thought emigrant letters were relatively truthful (*Ireland and the American Emigration*, pp.18-45). O'Brien's work is based on a re-assessment of Schrier's sources. O'Brien, 'Whither Tir na nÓg?'.

[24] Miller, *Ireland and Irish America*, p.117; Kerby A. Miller & Bruce D. Boling, 'Golden Streets, Bitter Tears: The Irish Image of America during the Era of Mass Migration', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol.10, no.1/2, *The Irish in America* (Fall 1990 / Winter 1991), pp.28, 31-2.

Migrants who went to America frequently compare it favourably with Britain, the option chosen by about three-quarters of post-war migrants. The differences reflect nineteenth century attitudes, when those too poor to cross the Atlantic instead crossed the Irish Sea. Nora Murphy, an informant for the folklore survey on emigration who herself went to America c.1893, summarized this view: 'hardly anyone went to England in those days – they were too grand to go.'[25] England also had historical and religious connotations as Ireland's age-old oppressor and imposer of Protestantism. Larry Reynolds recalls,

> I had a brother and a sister here [in Boston] at the time. I was going to go to England, but my mother said 'no, you won't go to England, you might lose your religion there'…She says 'write your sister and go to America,' she says and I had a lot of aunts and uncles out here. There was about eighteen in my father's family so there was a lot of them out here and my mother had three brothers and sisters here as well… I had a brother that went to England in 1936 and I think he might've fell away a little bit, so my mother was very aware of that. The young people, of course they all left Ireland at maybe seventeen or eighteen years old. In England, they'd be out partying and Mass wasn't high on their list.

Larry's mother was not the only one who believed young migrants in England faced the risk of 'falling away' from the Church.[26] Members of the Irish clergy seem to have directed most of their remarks on the risks or evils of emigration towards Britain in the post-war era, suggesting that by this time their feelings about America aligned with those of Larry's mother.[27]

Perceptions of treatment of the Irish also shaped some migrants' choices. When asked if he ever considered going to England instead of America, singer Liam Clancy said no, because 'if you went to England you were a Paddy, you were a navvy, you were the equivalent of the Mexican illegal going in, you were treated like dirt.'[28] His statement oversimplifies the experience of the Irish in Britain, as the next chapter shows, but reflects widely held views. By contrast, he continues, 'you came

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[25] Nora Murphy (age 78 in 1955, resident in Lissarulla, Claregalway, Co. Galway), 'Questionnaire: Emigration to America', NFC UCD.

[26] Enda Delaney, 'The Churches and Irish Emigration to Britain, 1921-60', *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol.52 (1998), pp.107; Eamonn Gaynor, 'The Camp Chaplain Scheme', *The Furrow*, vol.10, no.9, *With Our Emigrants* (Sept. 1959), pp.576-7; Fr Kieran O'Shea, *The Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy Scheme in Britain, 1957-82* (Naas, 1985).

[27] Miller, *Ireland and Irish America*, pp.90-1. In the post-famine era the clergy celebrated emigrants to America as missionaries of the faith and applauded their successes, while simultaneously condemning emigration as a threat to the nation and a danger to the emigrants themselves. By the post-war era those destined for America seem to have fallen on the former side of the line, while opinions on migration to Britain fell decidedly on the latter.

[28] Liam Clancy, interview with Miriam Nyhan, 29 March 2009, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.

to America as an Irishman. "Hey, you're from Ireland!" Because they blazed the way here, you know. So you were somebody if you came here.'[29] Attitudes towards the Irish in America had changed since Famine times when simian-like cartoons and references to their dirtiness, stupidity, aggression, and blind Catholicism prevailed. Bernadette Whelan argues that by mid-century the Irish in America were considered a success, 'whereas Irish relations with England were still politically problematic, Irish gains were comparatively less there, and it was portrayed in newspaper editorials and by some church and political leaders to be a dangerous place.'[30] With the socio-economic rise of Irish America and the success John F. Kennedy's election in 1960 symbolized, estimations of the Irish rose. While people in Ireland acknowledged negative reports from across the Atlantic and saw the occasional unsuccessful migrant return home, the positive images proved the most enduring.

Hollywood films added to the appeal of American life for prospective migrants in the twentieth century. Malachy McCourt, brother of memoirist Frank McCourt, recalled in an oral history interview:

> I used to dream about it all the time, a dream about coming. And I didn't think people in the United States did ordinary things because I was influenced by Hollywood I suppose, and films I had seen. I didn't think the people, for instance, that garbage had to be picked up or that bread had to be baked or cows had to be milked or wheat had to be ground into flour, and so on. It was all that way. I didn't even want to think that there was anything ordinary about this country. And I thought that all people did here was drive around in cars and go up in lifts, elevators to offices and shuffle papers, and then go home to sumptuous banquets in chandeliered houses. I'm not, you know, I'm not stupid but… I didn't want to know the real truth that there was such a thing as death and diseases, illness and old age, and discrimination and so forth. I didn't think that sort of thing existed here.[31]

This represents an iteration of the American dream. Cullen calls it the 'dream of the coast', one of 'effortless attainment' and a life of leisure, which Hollywood played a pivotal role in disseminating.[32] Its appeal made it difficult to dispel, even when potential migrants recognized it as unrealistic.

Fr. Charlie Coen, a concertina player from East Galway, described the look of the 'yanks' who epitomized that position:

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[29] Ibid.
[30] Whelan, 'The "Idea of America" in the New Irish State', p.95.
[31] Malachy McCourt, interview with Margo Nash, 12 March 1975, EIOHP. He neglects to mention in this interview that he was actually born in New York and the family returned to Ireland when he was still very young.
[32] Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 2003), pp.160, 173, 178.

> You were kind of over-awed even before you ever left, just by America in the movies, and the yanks coming home with the ten-gallon hat and the gold watch and chain across their chest and the white shirt that sort of sticks out in my mind from my early memories of a yank. [A yank] was kind of a big Texan with the gleaming white shirt - that's what struck me, and the gold chain, and always, nearly, a gray suit.[33]

He said the majority of his childhood schoolmates left Ireland after the Second World War and though some went to England, 'most came to America' because 'mostly all of them had relatives here. And there was more money to be made in America.'[34] However, the reality they found differed from the ideal:

> I suppose even though I was looking forward to America as the land of opportunity, either way behind it, I expected that you wouldn't be picking it off the streets, you know. Some ways I found Americans to be more down to earth than I expected. They weren't all… they didn't all live up to the impression I got from the Irish returning; they weren't all the big Texas ten-gallon hats that I expected when I came over here. I found people working, on the subways, and in every job, wearing their everyday clothes and all the rest of it. I found them more down to earth than I had expected, in a sense, and quite friendly.[35]

Migrants' encounters with American society proved more varied and complex than the image on the silver screen or the impressions they got from letters, parcels, or visitors.

Having crossed the Atlantic, they had to contend not only with their (perhaps misguided) preconceptions of the country, but also with American and Irish-American views of them. W.H.A. Williams has traced the 'stage Irishman' and his associated traits back to the twelfth century. By the mid-eighteenth century the 'Pat' or 'Mick' character had become established and his characteristic wildness and incivility took on humorous tones.[36] In nineteenth and early twentieth century America he continued to play the buffoon for comic relief on stages and in minstrel shows.[37] Liam Clancy's recollections of what he and his brothers faced when trying to establish acting careers suggest that these stereotypes remained alive and well in the 1950s: 'when we first started getting acting jobs, if you got an Irish part or if you were doing a television show playing some kind of an Irish part, they'd say, "could you kind of beef up your Irish accent?" They wanted us to conform to the stage

[33] Fr. Charlie Coen, interview with Mick Moloney, 3 Apr. 1979, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] W.H.A. Williams, *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana & Chicago, 1996), pp.57-8.
[37] Williams, *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream*, pp.64-5.

Irish.'[38] The image burdened musicians and performers, particularly when they believed they could present more authentic traditions, but audiences only wanted vaudeville. Sean-nós singer Joe Heaney felt this derived from ignorance and challenged it in his performances by historically contextualizing his songs:

> I try to educate them on what it's all about, how did it all start and going back to periods, because some of these people were never told anything by other people, they were used to this 'Finnegan's Wake' and 'Fine Girl You Are', nothing wrong with them songs but you want to let people know there's other songs, there's another side to Irish history besides that, you know. We weren't all drinking all the time, you see, to tell you the truth I very seldom do any drinking songs, because if you do people look at you and says 'there it is again, the Irish drinking again'. If they see three people coming out to a pub, one of them falls down drunk, 'oh, that's an Irishman' people say, you know. I'm trying to kill that image too, of the Irishman with the drink on the stage. I don't like that and I never have.[39]

He reveals conscious efforts to engage with and counter negative stereotypes – 'to kill that image' – and showcase the finer points of Irish culture. Examples of Heaney's performances support his statement.[40]

These attitudes also existed among Irish Americans and some musicians resented their unwillingness to learn about or appreciate traditional music over the vaudevillian variety. Gene Kelly from Co. Kilkenny played accordion in New York from the 1930s to 1960s and said,

> When you really get down to Irish culture it's very sincere. I mean, they put their whole heart and soul into it. Not just the average joker that you see on the stage with a big bow tie and a clay pipe, that kind of culture you can get it for a nickel a dozen, but the real people… The Irish-American style they seem to make a joke out of it or look down their nose at you in some form. They always have the 'I'm the big guy and I can do it better, you should have an amplifier on your recording and you should have this that and the other.' They're a set of traditions, they don't know very much about it. They haven't listened to uilleann pipes, they'd rather listen to a saxophone player; they wouldn't listen to an uilleann piper. The man would be pouring his heart out with a beautiful traditional number and some joker's over in the corner blasting a trumpet with 'Stars and Stripes Forever', stuff like that. He gets all the fanfare and the poor guy who's really doing it right gets nothing. He's not looking for anything, he's just looking for recognition… They don't appreciate what real traditional Irish means.[41]

The uilleann pipes here symbolize an authentic Irish culture, set against the 'big bow tie and clay pipe' of the Irish minstrel. Partly Gene thinks the division between these

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[38] Liam Clancy, interview with Miriam Nyhan, 29 March 2009, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.
[39] Joe Heaney, interview with Mick Moloney, 2 Jan. 1982, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[40] *Cartlanna Seosaimh Uí Éanaí* / The Joe Heaney Archive has many recordings of his performances that include his introductions to songs.
[41] Gene Kelly, interview with Mick Moloney, 24 Feb. 1978, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

stems from Irish Americans feeling 'under two flags', because in their everyday life they may choose the American side of the divide and yet want to retain a connection to their Irishness. He also suggests tensions between Irish migrants and Irish Americans only started to dissipate in the late 1960s. New Irish arrivals to the United States had to negotiate these cleavages – between Hollywood and reality, Irish and Irish-American, traditional and stage-Irish – to construct their own identities and find a place in American society.[42]

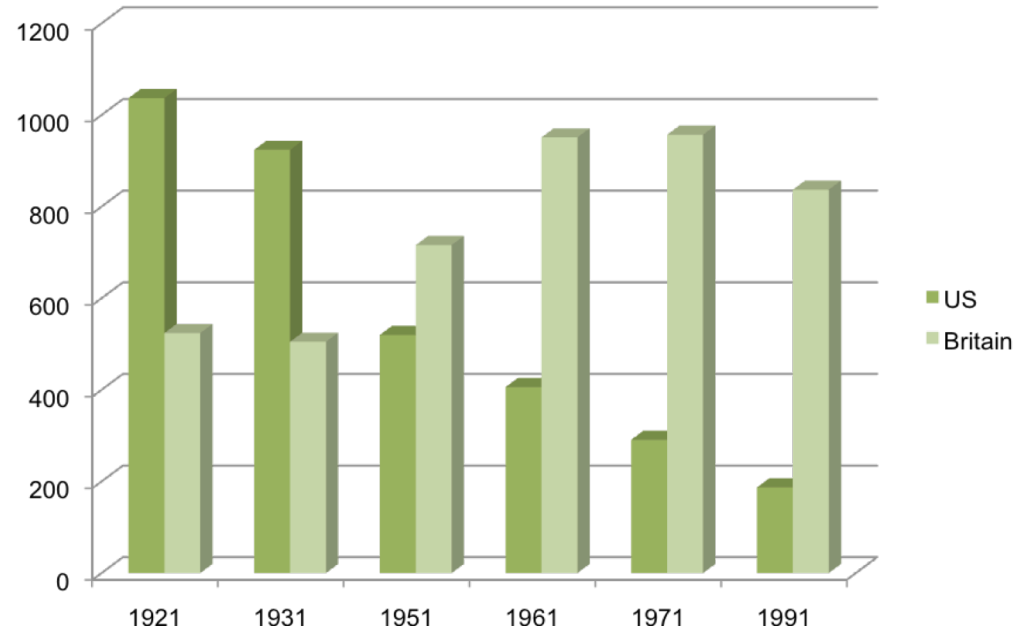
II. Journeys and Destinations

Irish migration to the United States peaked during the famine and continued at high rates in the decades following. Kerby Miller defines the post-famine era as from 1856 until 1929, during which time approximately five million people migrated from Ireland, four million destined for America.[43] The Great Depression, the Second World War, and increasingly restrictive immigration legislation led to a decline US immigration rates from their peak in the first decade of the twentieth century.[44] Irish migration gradually shifted towards other destinations, particularly Great Britain (discussed in the next chapter), and the Irish-born population in America steadily declined (figure 3.1). Earlier generations aged without full replenishment and by 1960 the average age was 59.3 (figure 3.2).

The origins of immigration restrictions lie in Chinese-American history and discrimination, culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.[45] The 1921 and 1924 Immigration Acts expanded constraints, establishing a numerical cap on the total number of immigrants and creating quotas on the grounds of national origin. These derived from calculations of heritage of the American population at the base year of 1890, with two percent of each nationality present in that year allotted for the quota. Congress tried to argue for the fair and accurate nature of the quotas, but choosing 1890 as the base meant deliberately privileging northern Europeans, with only twelve percent of the 165,000 total quota entries allocated to 'new immigrant' groups from southern and eastern Europe.[46] The discriminatory system continued

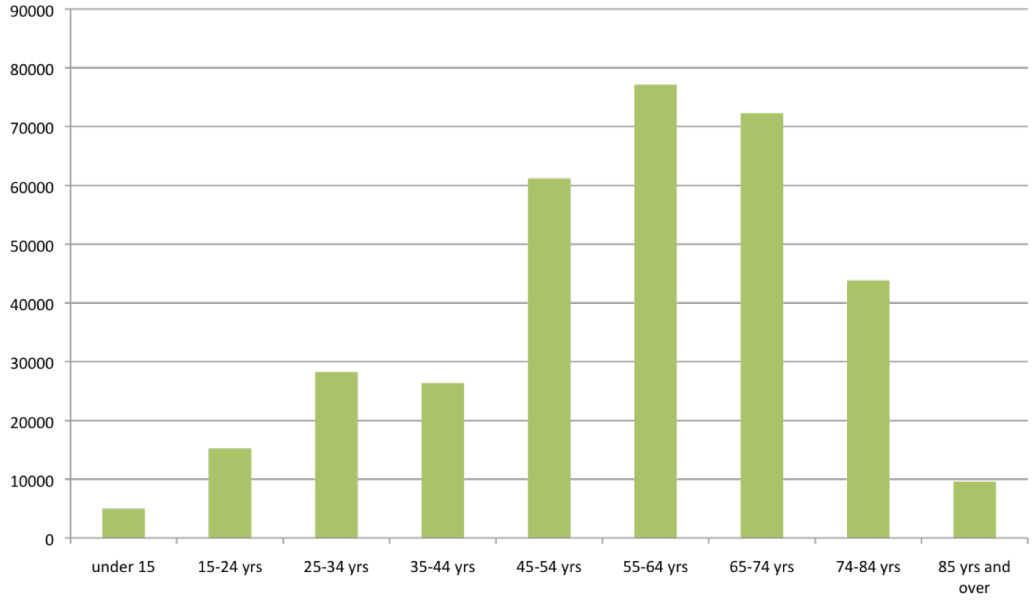
[42] Kenny, *New Directions in Irish-American History*, p.7.
[43] Miller, *Ireland and Irish-America*, p.79.
[44] Reed Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History* (Bedford / St. Martin's, Boston, 1994), pp.10-11.
[45] The Immigration Act of 1917 extended this further with the establishment of an Asiatic Barred Zone. Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943.
[46] Reed Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History* (Bedford/St. Martin's, Boston, 1994), pp.20-2.

Figure 3.1: Irish-born in the US and Britain, 1921-1991 (000s)



Source: Delaney, *Irish Emigration since 1921*, p.39.

Figure 3.2: Irish-born population of the US by age, 1960



Source: *1960 Census of Population*, Subject Reports 1A-1E, Section 2, table 16.

under the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, though some restrictions loosened with revisions of non-quota categories and orders of preference for entry.[47] In his book, *A*

[47] First preference went to immigrants with skills in high-demand and their spouses and children; second to parents of US citizens and unmarried adult children; third to spouses and unmarried adult children of permanent resident aliens; fourth to siblings and married children of US citizens with their spouses and children; fifth to all other applicants. Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America*, p.159; Leonard

Nation of Immigrants (first published in 1958), John F. Kennedy decried the national origins system:

> The famous words of Emma Lazarus on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty read: 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.' Until 1921 this was an accurate picture of our society. Under the present law it would be appropriate to add: 'as long as they come from Northern Europe, are not too tired or too poor or slightly ill, never stole a loaf of bread, never joined any questionable organization, and can document their activities for the past two years.'[48]

In other passages he argued that legislation based on national origins contradicts the foundational principles of the country. Quotas remained in place until the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, which came into effect in 1968, abolished racial and ethnic discrimination in immigration policy and opened the door for a more globalized flow.[49]

The Irish never filled their allocated quota, but nonetheless the restrictions impacted migrant flows. A citizen or permanent resident had to 'claim' or 'sponsor' a prospective immigrant and those sponsored by family members received higher preference. This sustained patterns of chain migration and settlement, as family, friends, and neighbours from Ireland brought out new migrants. Brendan Tonra says of his decision to move to Boston from Co. Mayo in 1959:

> Well, I was tired of trying to make a good living as a farmer. My father and mother and I had a brother who was about fifteen years younger than me, we were stuck there on that little farm. My sister was in this country; she was younger than me too. So after she got settled here she wrote to my mother and told her that she could make arrangements for us all to come over here. So we did… Well, I came first and then they came the next year. My sister and I got an apartment and brought them over. My father's health wasn't too good, he had asthma and he was getting old, but my mother was quite a bit younger and when she came here she got to work and my brother was still going to grammar school. So they got settled here and my father and mother had quite a few years here.

No interviewee for this study came to America completely alone: all travelled with or to friends or relatives. Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin recalls: 'Boston's the first place I landed. My sister was there, my aunts were there, my cousins were there.' Jimmy Marshall joined his older brother, who had migrated to Worcester, MA five years

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Dinnerstein & David M. Reimers, *The World Comes to America: Immigration to the United States since 1945* (Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 2014), pp.9-10; Ronald A. Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Little Brown & Company, Boston, 1993), pp.400-1.

[48] John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1964), p.77.

[49] Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America*, pp.44-5; Dinnerstein & Reimers, *The World Comes to America*, pp.24-5, 35.

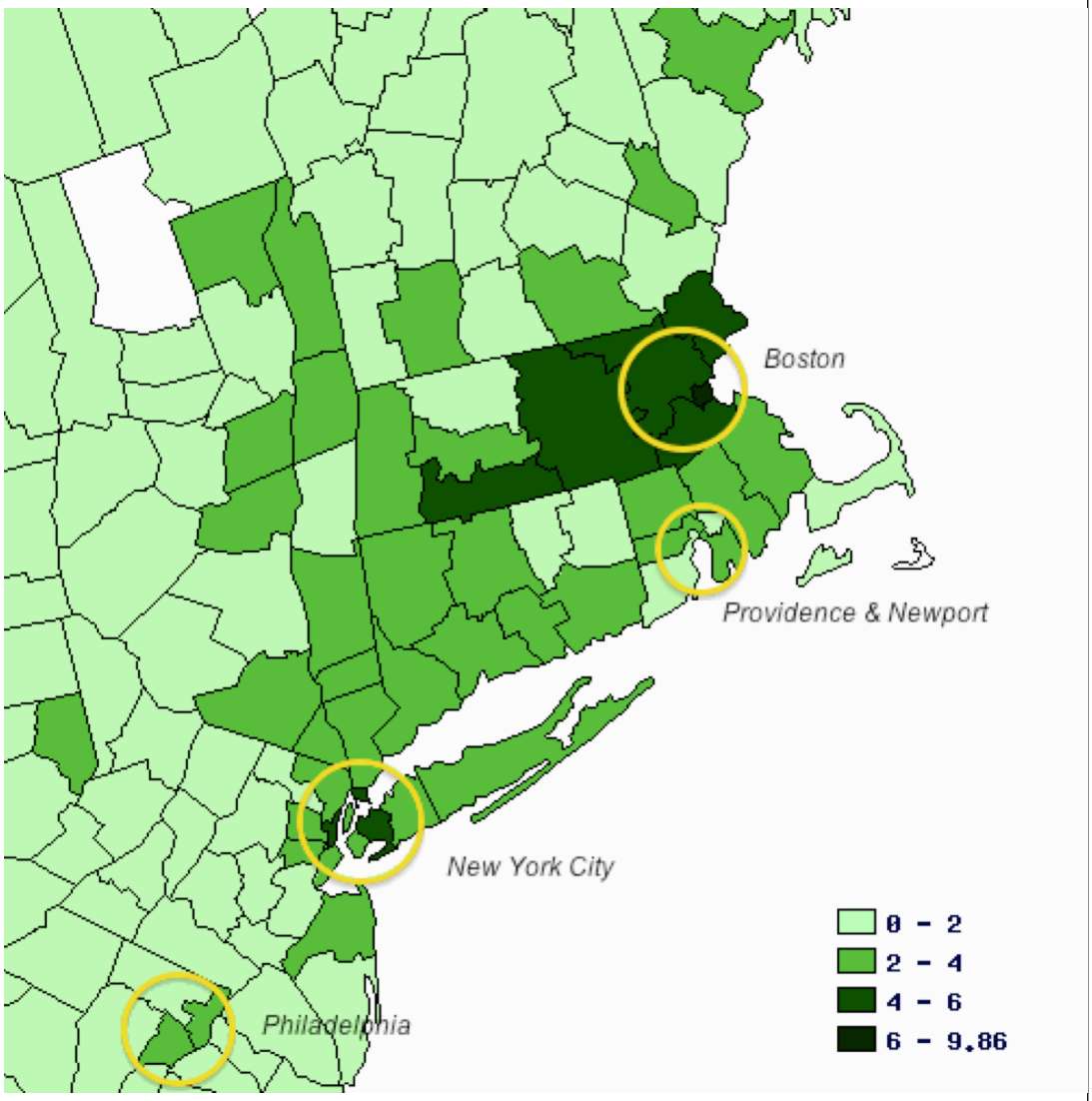
previously. Jerry Lynch and his wife Betty went to New York because she had lived there before they married and had a sister there. Kevin Henry says, 'everybody had their own destination' based on where others had gone before: his father's relatives were in Chicago and his mother's in New Jersey, but he went initially to New York where he had brothers and sisters.[50] People other than immediate relatives could also provide sponsorship: though Mike Rafferty's sister lived in New York, he says 'the person that picked me up, he was a policeman in New York and he put up the papers for me. He was a friend of ours. I knew his brother in Ireland and his sisters and he agreed to put up the papers for me.'[51]

Chain migration perpetuated patterns established during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and Irish migrants continued to exhibit a marked tendency to settle in urban areas, as census figures testify (Appendix 3, table 1).[52] In particular, they favoured the northeast of the country and the map shows the Irish-born population as a percentage of the total in counties of that region, with major metropolitan areas labelled (figure 3.3). However, in the 1950s many migrants from earlier decades had moved from city centres to suburbs. The high proportions of Irish in Connecticut and New Jersey (close to New York City), for example, at least partially resulted from this trend. In this respect, established Irish and Irish-American populations followed white American working- and middle-class post-war demographic patterns and the move symbolized their growing economic security and prosperity.[53] Recent migrants tended to stay in the cities and those in which the Irish constituted more than two percent of the total population in 1960 include: Boston, Massachusetts; Butte, Montana; Chicago, Illinois; Newport, Rhode Island; New York City, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Providence, Rhode Island; and San Francisco, California (see Appendix 3, table 1). These areas (excluding their

[50] Kevin was not 'claimed' by a family member. He pooled money with other migrants and they all used the same bank receipt to show they had enough money to claim themselves into the country. He crossed the border from Canada at Niagara Falls and initially went to join his siblings in New York.
[51] Mike Rafferty, interview with Jo Reed, 16 Sept. 2010, 'A Conversation with Irish Flute Player and National Heritage Fellow Mike Rafferty', audio podcast, National Endowment for the Arts.
[52] Morton D. Winsberg, 'Irish Settlement in the United States, 1850-1980', *Éire-Ireland*, vol.20, no.1 (1985), pp.7-14.
[53] Robert A. Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006; Matthew D. Lassiter & Chistopher Niedt, 'Suburban Diversity in Postwar America', *Journal of Urban History*, vol.39, no.1 (Jan. 2013), pp.3-14; Robert W. Snyder, 'The Neighborhood Changed: The Irish of Washington Heights and Inwood since 1945', in Bayor & Meagher, *The New York Irish*, p.455; Morton Winsberg, 'The Suburbanization of the Irish in Boston, Chicago, and New York', *Éire-Ireland*, vol.21, no.3 (Fall 1986), pp.90-104.

suburban hinterlands) accounted for 40.4 percent of the total Irish-born population in all states.

Figure 3.3: Map of Irish-born as percentage of total population in the northeast US, 1960



Source: Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia. Data drawn from the *US Census of Population, 1960.*

As addressed above, this chapter primarily focuses on Boston, New York, and Chicago. All have long histories of Irish settlement and the two charts below illustrate changes between 1920 and 1960 (figures 3.4 and 3.5): in both absolute numbers and proportionally, all three cities experienced a drop in the Irish population for at least two decades prior to 1950[54] and between 1950 and 1960 numbers surged with the arrival of new immigrants. New York City witnessed the

[54] The figures for Irish-born in 1920 include Northern Ireland as they precede partition; figures from 1930 on exclude those born in Northern Ireland. This partially accounts for the drop between 1920 and 1930.

greatest total increase in the Irish-born population and Boston had the greatest proportional increase. While on the surface these three cities may seem to follow similar patterns, they differed in the demographic concentration and spread, which affected opportunities for socializing and music-making. Boston's higher concentration of Irish-born people created conditions for a vibrant social scene, while Chicago and New York had more dispersed populations and ethnic venues. Though this chapter is organized thematically, integrating discussions of different locations, it also highlights their differences to analyze the complex relationship between historical and geographic contexts and migrants' varied experiences.

Figure 3.4: Irish-born population in Boston, New York City & Chicago

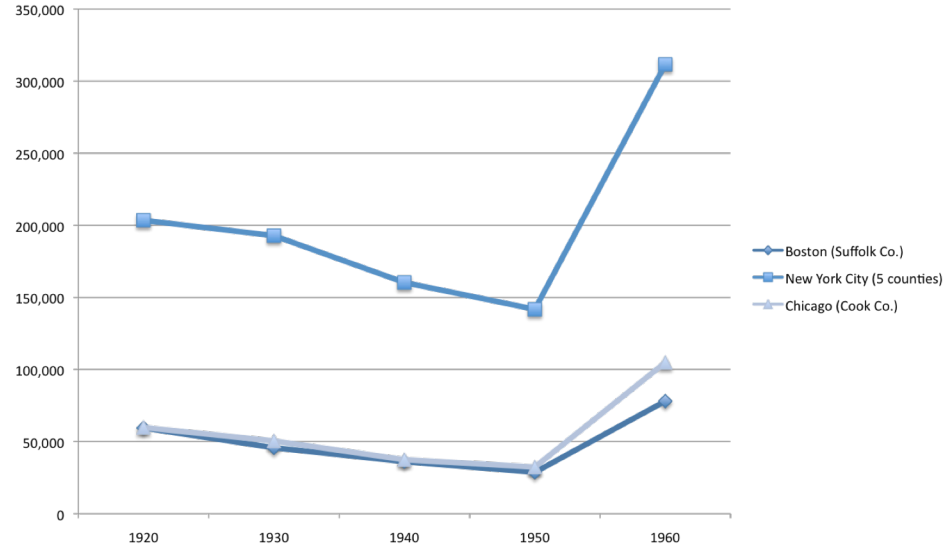
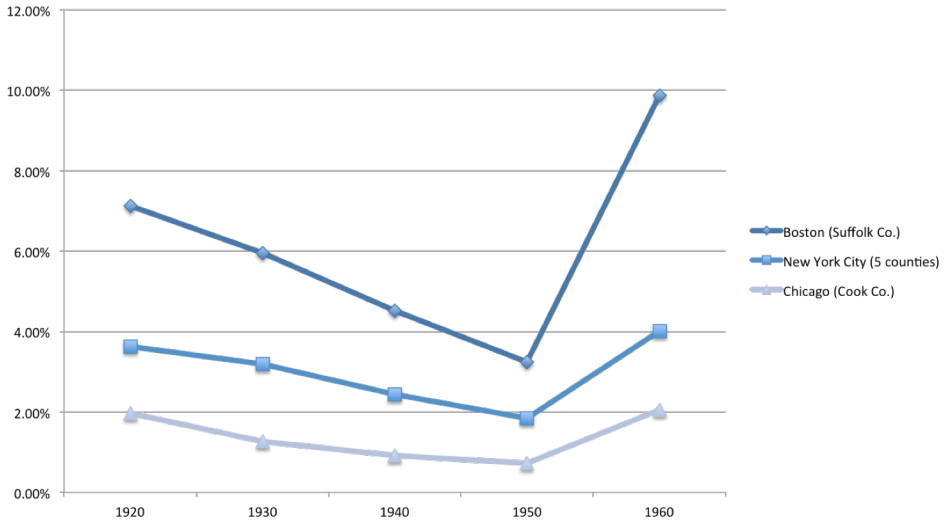


Figure 3.5: Irish-born as percentage of the total population in Boston, New York City & Chicago



Source: Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia. Data drawn from the United States Censuses, 1920 to 1960.

The charts above illustrate that though Boston may have had lower absolute numbers of Irish immigrants, they constituted a higher share of the total population, making it the 'most Irish city in America'.[55] They concentrated in certain areas: in 1950, 59 percent of the Irish-born in Boston lived in census tracts with a high share of other Irish immigrants, compared to 48 and 41 percent in New York City and Chicago respectively.[56] This geographical clustering, though decried by some as 'ghettoization', had the effect of creating the feeling of a strong, cohesive community.[57] The well-oiled political machine of the Boston Irish elected eight Democratic mayors of Irish birth or descent in continuous sequence between 1930 and 1993. Despite this, Kevin Kenny reports that the Irish in Boston remained at a lower socio-economic level than their counterparts elsewhere in America:

> The Irish (along with the Italians) continued to lag behind all other white groups in the 1950s and 1960s, holding three times their share of unskilled laboring jobs, and disproportionately fewer managerial and proprietorship positions. If one thing is certain about twentieth-century American social history, however, it is that the Boston Irish cannot be held to typify the American Irish; on the contrary, they were exceptionally disadvantaged.[58]

While powerful in the sphere of local politics, they lacked equivalent clout in the business world, which remained the preserve of the native-born elite.[59] Despite the decline in numbers of new immigrants compared to the 1920s and relative economic weakness, the post-war era is considered the heyday of the Irish in Boston. In popular memory it certainly compares favourably with the poverty that preceded it and the racial tension and population dispersal that came afterwards. Economically the Irish in Boston may have fared worse than their counterparts in other cities, but demographic and geographic conditions combined to create the atmosphere of a strong, centralized community and one in which music and dancing featured prominently.

New York City in the post-war era had a much larger Irish-born population than other metropolitan areas. It also had perhaps the strongest image in the minds of Irish people: prior knowledge of symbols like Times Square, Broadway, and the

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[55] James O'Toole, 'Boston', in Michael Glazier (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America* (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN, 1999), p.62.
[56] Winsberg, 'The Suburbanization of the Irish in Boston, Chicago and New York', p.95; Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History*, p.126.
[57] Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis 1880-1970* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1973), pp.163-5, pp.167-8.
[58] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 228; Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians*, pp.138-40.
[59] O'Connor, *The Boston Irish*, pp.224-5; Winsberg, 'The Suburbanization of the Irish in Boston, Chicago and New York', p.97.

Statue of Liberty lent an air of anticipation to migrants' arrivals.[60] While the Irish had dominated local politics through the infamous Tammany Hall, by the 1960s they had lost their hold on power due in large part to the changing ethnic composition of the city.[61] Likewise the 'Golden Age' of Irish music in New York from c.1900 to 1930 passed with the impact of the Depression and decline in companies producing ethnic music records.[62] Along with the bright lights of Broadway, migrants in the 1950s found a mature Irish population well established in neighbourhoods including Washington Heights in northern Manhattan, Woodside in Queens, and Highbridge in the Bronx and their attendant Catholic parishes.[63] Overall they had a relatively high economic status in the city, with Irish immigrant families having an average income only seven percent less than white families of native parentage (compared to ten percent less for Chicago Irish families and twenty percent less for those in Boston).[64] New arrivals revitalized organizations including the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Gaelic League, and county associations and they developed the social scene through new dance halls and regular attendance of GAA matches at Gaelic Park.[65]

As in Boston and New York, the Irish in Chicago had since the mid-nineteenth century built a political machine that elected mayors and city aldermen of Irish descent, giving the group an influence that far outstripped its proportion of the population.[66] This had its benefits: the rise of Cork-born Francis O'Neill to Chief of Police in 1901 gave him the resources to undertake the collection of traditional Irish music, forever enriching Ireland's cultural record.[67] O'Neill was also involved in the Irish Music Club of Chicago in the first decade of the twentieth century, the earliest known organization of traditional musicians in America. However, the Irish hold on

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[60] Fr. Charlie Coen, interview with Mick Moloney, 3 Apr. 1979, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; Joan Dolan, interview with Andrew Ciancimino & Marion R. Casey, 16 Nov. 2006, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU; Almeida, *Irish Immigrants in New York City*, p.27.
[61] Bayor & Meagher (eds.), *The New York Irish*, pp.535-6; David M. Reimers, 'Overview: An End and a Beginning', in Bayor & Meagher (eds.), *The New York Irish*, pp.419-21.
[62] Miller, '"Our Own Little Isle": Irish Traditional Music in New York', p.103.
[63] Linda Dowling Almeida, 'A Great Time to Be in America: The Irish in Post-Second World War New York City', in Keogh, O'Shea & Quinlan (eds.), *The Lost Decade*, pp.210-11; Kate Feighery, 'The Irish in Highbridge: Culture and Community Life in a Bronx Neighbourhood', paper presented at the American Conference for Irish Studies (New Orleans, March 2012).
[64] Winsberg, 'The Suburbanization of the Irish in Boston, Chicago and New York', p.97.
[65] Almeida, *Irish Immigrants in New York City*, pp.113-17, 123-6.
[66] Michael F. Funchion, 'The Political and Nationalist Dimensions', in McCaffrey et al., *The Irish in Chicago*, p.90; Paul M. Green, 'Chicago Politics', in Glazier (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America*, pp.146-50.
[67] O'Neill published four major collections of music and two works of a musicological nature between 1903 and 1922. Nicholas Carolan, *A Harvest Saved: Francis O'Neill and Irish Music in Chicago* (Ossian Publications, Cork, 1997).

local power waned and from the mid-1960s Richard J. Daley, the sixth Irish Catholic mayor (in office from 1955 until his death in 1976), faced a decline precipitated by his opposition to public-sector unions and discriminatory hiring practices.[68] As in Boston and New York, while the Irish political machine may have succeeded in running the city, it did so in often corrupt and biased ways, doing little to benefit the city's poor and racial minorities. This stance proved unsustainable as demographic patterns changed: between 1950 and 1980 the African-American and Hispanic population of Chicago rose from 14 percent of the total to 55 percent (compared to 10 to 47 percent in New York and 3 to 17 percent in Boston).[69] These local contexts, as well as wider American ones, impacted upon migrants' experiences and memories.

III. Working Lives

The United States boomed after the Second World War: suburbs spread, families had more children, consumer spending rose, college education rates increased, the economy grew, and the Cold War witnessed the expansion of American foreign power. The country prospered, but unequally: a period of urban and industrial decline disproportionately affected cities in the Northeast and Midwest; poverty and racism excluded many from suburban bliss; women, who had entered the workforce in larger numbers during the war, increasingly questioned becoming housewives; McCarthyism and the Red Scares repressed radical political views and the people who held them, including trade unionists, folk singers, artists, and intellectuals.[70] Into this context, Irish migrants arrived with their own goals, in which making money featured prominently. Nineteenth century arrivals have received a great deal of scholarly attention in their capacity as workers – (male) labourers and (female) domestic servants – but the same cannot be said of the post-war era, though the workplace constituted one of the key sites where they encountered and negotiated the many diverse Americas of the 1950s.

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[68] Kenny, *The American Irish*, pp.240-1; Funchion, 'The Political and Nationalist Dimensions', in McCaffrey et al., *The Irish in Chicago*, pp.88-91.
[69] Winsberg, 'The Suburbanization of the Irish in Boston, Chicago and New York', p.95.
[70] Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban*, pp.1-5; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, revised ed. (Basic Books, New York, 2008), pp.9-10; Michelle Nickerson, 'Women, Domesticity, and Postwar Conservatism', *OAH Magazine of History*, vol.17, no.2, Conservatism (Jan. 2003), pp.17-21; Ellen Schrecker, 'McCarthyism's Ghosts: Anticommunism and American Labor', *New Labor Forum*, no.4 (Spring/Summer 1999), pp.7-17; David K. Dunaway & Molly Beer, *Singing Out: An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals* (Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 2010), pp.76-106.

Irish migrants tended to have relatively low levels of education, which impacted their roles in the labour force: in 1960 Irish-born US residents over age fourteen had completed a median of 8.6 years of schooling and 62.5 percent of men and 64.4 percent of women had eight years or less of elementary education.[71] This was only slightly worse than the foreign-born population as a whole, which had 8.45 average median years of schooling.[72] However, the native-born population had an average median 10.85 years of education and only 34.7 percent had eight years or less of schooling. The native-born population also had a much higher level of college education, at 15.7 percent, compared to the Irish-born at 7.2 percent (see Appendix 3, table 2). Dividing the Irish-born group by age (and therefore roughly by generation) complicates this picture, because those age fourteen to forty-four had on average two years more schooling than their counterparts over age forty-four.[73] Combining gender and age reveals further differentiations: 37.8 percent of Irish-born men age fourteen to forty-four had eight years or less of schooling, compared to 69.4 percent of men over age forty-four; among women the figures are 7 and 72 percent respectively, an even starker disparity (see Appendix 3, table 3).

These patterns had their roots in Ireland where until 1967 the only children who received a secondary education came from families who could both afford to pay for their schooling and did not need the extra income they could earn. Gray and O'Carroll's research on Irish life histories indicates the presence of a gender gap in educational attainment in Ireland from the 1940s, with boys more likely to leave school early to work or emigrate.[74] However, in census data it is impossible to segregate education received in Ireland from qualifications gained in America. Once in the US, some migrants chose to pursue a high school equivalency degree or undertook occupation-specific training. The drive to continue education, or make up for opportunities unavailable in Ireland, is a recurring theme in migrant memories,

[71] *1960 Census of Population*, Subject Reports 1A-1E, Section 2, Table 10. These figures are comparable to those for the foreign-born population generally, but much higher than the same figures for the native-born, people of native parentage, and people of foreign or mixed parentage (including second-generation Irish). See Appendix 3, table 2.

[72] Median values for years of education are only available by sex. Therefore, the numbers cited here for the whole group are average median values (calculated by taking the mean of two medians).

[73] See Appendix 3, table 3. Median years of school completed by Irish-born people age 14 to 44 rage from 10.3 to 11.2, while for age 45 and up they are between 8.1 and 8.8. *1960 Census of Population*, Subject Reports 1A-1E, Section 2, Table 12; Almeida, *Irish Immigrants in New York City*, p.32.

[74] Jane Gray & Aileen O'Carroll, 'Education and Class-formation in 20th Century Ireland: A Retrospective Qualitative Longitudinal Analysis', *Sociology*, vol.46, no.4 (2012), p.704.

both oral and written.[75] In addition, all male migrants had to register for the draft and many fought in the Korean War or served on European bases, making them eligible for the GI Bill. Memoirist Frank McCourt, despite his lack of a high school education, followed the latter path to earn a degree from New York University and enter the teaching profession.[76]

Levels of education affected migrants' occupations and census data points to a marked increase in the numbers of Irish-born professionals in the post-war generation compared to their older counterparts (Appendix 3, Table 5). However, Irish immigrants still remained overwhelmingly working class in 1960. Compared to the American-born and foreign-born populations, the Irish-born were over-represented in semi- and unskilled occupations and under-represented in skilled and professional occupations (table 3.1 below). Among those age fourteen to forty-four, 65.7 percent of Irish-born men and 43.2 percent of women worked in semi-skilled or unskilled positions.[77] Women, who overall had more years of education, entered clerical roles in much higher numbers than their predecessors. Almost the same percentages of Irish-born women were professionals as their counterparts of American birth and parentage, while men were less well represented in that category (see Appendix 3, table 4). The following sections use personal stories of migrants' work experiences to examine the ways in which gender, class, and ethnicity intertwined.

Table 3.1: American-born, foreign-born, and Irish-born people in occupational categories, 1960

	American-born	Foreign-born	Irish-born
Male			
Skilled/professional	39.18%	35.66%	27.60%
Semi-/unskilled	55.39%	61.97%	70.07%
Female			
Skilled/professional	54.02%	42.40%	38.95%
Semi-/unskilled	39.52%	53.82%	57.81%

Source: *US Census of Population, 1960*, Subject Reports, 'Nativity and Parentage' 1A-1E, Section 2, Tables 5 & 11. See Appendix 3, table 4 for more detail.

[75] Ide O'Carroll, *Models for Movers: Irish Women's Emigration to America* (Attic Press, Dublin, 1990), p.69; Angeline Kearns Blain, *I Used to Be Irish: Leaving Ireland, Becoming American* (A & A Farmar, Dublin, 2009), pp.258-77.
[76] Frank McCourt, *'Tis* (Touchstone, New York, 2000), pp.146-7, 216.
[77] Appendix 3, table 4 compares occupations of population groups in 1960. Table 5 divides the Irish-born by age and occupation. Occupation categories 1 to 5 are considered skilled / professional and categories 6 to 10 are semi-skilled / unskilled.

Men's Working Lives

The majority of Irish immigrant men of the post-war generation (age fourteen to forty-four in 1960) worked in unskilled and semi-skilled manual occupations, though they are not associated with one particular industry in America as their counterparts were in Britain. The stories of two interviewees, Kevin Henry and Jerry Lynch, highlight many of the themes in men's working lives: transience versus settlement, hard work, union membership, relations between racial and ethnic groups, and occupational change over time.

In 1954 Kevin Henry came to the United States via England, where he had spent six years working as an agricultural labourer, coal miner, and tunnel digger, and Canada, where he worked as a labourer for about nine months. These experiences gave him a frame of reference for evaluating working conditions and wages in America.[78] He initially joined his siblings in Westchester County, New York where he worked in tunnels and as a waiter and musician in Rockaway Beach, before moving on to Florida. He contrasts 'good' and 'bad' jobs in his assessment of these places:

> I was in the tunnels in New York in a while. I was in the compressed air. I was in the compressed air in London for a while too, my brothers were into that. Compressed air, there was good money in compressed air. If you could take it… which a lot of people couldn't take it, you had to be in good shape… Then there was supposed to be, fields are green far away, if you know what I mean, so we went to Florida. Wages were bad, wages were bad. I worked on the beach in New York too, so I did, sideline, worked on construction during the five days and I was a plain waiter out in Rockaway Beach.

As his mention of 'sidelines' suggests, he kept his options open and found additional ways of supplementing what he earned from heavy labour.

Chasing the money south to Florida he worked as a carpenter putting together hotel beds and then as a diver laying pipes in the Everglades. But once again, driven by the hope of higher wages, he moved to Chicago and then after a short time on to Butte, Montana where an uncle lived. He worked in the copper mines there, getting a job straightaway because of his experience in England. However, overall he found it 'wasn't my cup of tea' and he only stayed a few months:

> The conditions weren't up to par compared to England. You'd get injured very fast. You drove the tunnel and you left the rock here and there. Strange

[78] Sara Goek, '"Fields Are Green Far Away": Irish Migration, Culture, and Transnationalism in the Post-War Era', paper presented at the Modern Irish History Seminar, University of Edinburgh (4 Feb. 2015).

> thing at night, the tremor comes on the earth, you find it in the coal mines too that you find rocks in the morning on the road. Especially on the night shift. 'Twas hard rock. There was a certain amount of gold in it, but it was copper. The richest hill on earth, it was known as one time… A lot of [Irish] had moved out and if they didn't they were in the local graveyard. Because, for the simple reason, once you got the mountain con or silicosis, a year to a day until you were put in the ground… The four or five months that I spent there myself 'twas wintertime, things were twenty below zero and all that. But you were away from the cold, that was one thing about it, you were away from the cold.

Working in the mines got him in out of the harsh winter weather, but in the long-term it did not seem worth the risk to remain in Butte. By contrast, Chicago, to which he returned, he described as a 'booming town' with plenty of opportunities. Initially he got a job labouring in tunnels, the same as he had done in New York and London:

> I came in here in November and went to work right away in the tunnels here. I had worked with this Healy in New York before, but here in these tunnels here no white man worked in them, they were all black. We were the only two white men that was in them, but we stayed there 'til the weather got fine! We worked the sewers and then I became an iron worker.

Two things are apparent from this statement: he got a job in Chicago with the same firm that had employed him in New York, S.A. Healy Company, and the racial composition of the workforce in Chicago seemed noticeably different from that in New York. Kevin went on to have a thirty-seven year career as an iron worker.

Two themes tie together his diverse string of occupations: the first is his continuing search for 'green fields far away', the jobs with the best conditions and highest wages; the second is his union membership. He credits the Miners' Union in England for his full immersion in trade unionism, but, unusually for someone from a rural background in Ireland, his introduction to it came when he worked footing turf on a government scheme at age sixteen.[79] Following on from these experiences he joined, by his own count, eight to ten unions during the course of his life. He names the Miners' Union in England, helping to develop a Labourers' Union in Toronto, the Musicians' Union in New York, and the Ironworkers' Union in Chicago. He also contributed to the labour cause by playing the war pipes on picket lines. Many

[79] Of this experience Kevin said, 'I did try it one time in Ireland. We were footing turf and we went on strike (we were only about sixteen at the time) for more money, we were only getting four and tuppence. We didn't get anywhere.' See also: Chapter 2, section II; Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War*, pp.159-60; Behan, *With Breast Expanded*, pp.49-53.

Irishmen in the post-war era chose to move on when wages or conditions fell below par, but Kevin's story complicates this picture of transience as resistance.[80]

While a search for better conditions in many cases drove his mobility, he also joined the union even if he knew he would only stay a short time, showing the value he placed on workers' solidarity and fair wages. As he put it, 'if you want to get a job join up! You might be only in it for a week. But it was all a part of getting there.' Once he had settled permanently in Chicago and joined the Ironworkers' Union, which offered security, Kevin still highlights the importance of skills and versatility in keeping reliable employment.

> I worked the Hancock, all that. In summertime I worked the steel because in wintertime the steel got too hairy for you, as we call hairy, on account of the frost you couldn't walk the beams… But in order to be, in order to be in the Ironworkers' Union you had to be versatile, if an order came into the hall that you wanted connectors, well that's the hardest job there is, that's setting it, you know you were on a wing and a prayer and hairy as we call it. When you had it all down pat you could take any job out of the hall where more people only could take one particular job so it helped quite a bit.

The Hancock building is a landmark, even in a city known for its architecture, but Kevin declined to elaborate on its symbolic significance. For him, its value seems to come from the steady employment it offered and the opportunity to utilize his skills.

Unlike Kevin, Jerry Lynch did not exhibit a high level of mobility. He arrived in New York City in 1959 with his wife after having qualified as a carpenter in Ireland. Because his wife had family and a secretarial job in the city, he had to remain there. He recalls:

> I found it very hard to get work at first when I went out there. Things were not too easy to get a job there at the time. I was there for nearly three months before I got kind of a steady job except a week here and a week there… If I had enough money to come home during that first three months when I couldn't get a job, I would've come home, but it didn't work out that way. I'm glad that it didn't because once I started to move then things moved.

After the first difficult months, he settled in to a career as a tunnel worker, or 'sandhog' and member of Local 147 AFL-CIO, Tunnel Workers' Union of New

[80] Scholars sometimes assume that workers have three mutually exclusive ways of controlling their labour: they can move on; they can resist, generally through unions and strike action; or they can control their own labour through self-employment or a co-operative. Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Brill, Leiden, 2008), p.151.

York, which has a history dating back to the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge in the 1870s.[81] In the post-war era it had a diverse workforce:

> Irish, Italian, a lot of Italians, a lot of coloured, more Irish, Italians and coloured, West Indians, a lot from West India [sic], especially in the tunnels. But I'll tell you one thing, one thing about working in tunnels, the men you work with become your greatest friends because they could save your life any day of the week under the ground. You can have arguments over the ground, that's accepted, but if you work in mining, especially tunnels, what they call mining in New York, and if you have an argument downstairs you come up and you're sent up and you're told in no certain terms where to go and not to come back. The comradeship that I found, I belonged to Local 147 in New York and the comradeship that I found there in anything up to fourteen, fifteen hundred men was unbelievable. You had to be there. They were friends all the way through. If it went very deep, there was some serious accidents in tunnels, people got killed, not an awful lot of it, but their families were helped out by Local 147 members and all this kind of stuff. When the chips were down they were there to back them up whatever way they could. That's the one thing that I never did see, I worked at an outside site construction in New York and it wasn't, the comradeship wasn't there at all. Black and white there was no difference in the world. I went to black parties, I was invited to weddings and all. It was something that doesn't happen in a lot of other circumstances that I know of and jeez, I was proud of it. 'Twas a great experience. It knocked off the rough edges of youth to talk, even to sit down at lunch over it. A lot of the guys from down south, they were born on big farms, cotton and all this kind of stuff and to hear their life stories, how they came up, they didn't come up in any Sunday schools anyway, they had it rough enough coming up there, as rough as we ever had it here in Ireland, which is something you wouldn't imagine. If I hadn't gone to the States I would never have thought. It sounds like the money outside in the States, you had nothing to do but pick it up. You get that attitude here, but it doesn't happen. You get an education working with these type of people that 'twould make you think straight anyway and realize that there was two sides to every country. Thanks be to God, things worked out very good.

At the time of Jim Crow laws in the South and the on-going national Civil Rights movement, a young Irishman from Clare had his horizons broadened by his workmates, black and white, and he took great pride in learning from them. He may have come to America thinking of it as a land of milk and honey, but struggling to find a job and then engaging in the difficult work of the sandhogs showed him another side of the country. He found 'comradeship' among a diverse group of people, in a way that contrasts to the ethnic-centred work narratives of Irishmen in Britain (Chapter 4). Jerry's memories and those of his contemporaries, including Frank McCourt, Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé, and Angeline Kearns Blain, demonstrate

[81] Paul E. Delaney, *Sandhogs: A History of the Tunnel Workers of New York* (Longfield Press, New York, 1963).

broad-minded, progressive views on race shaped by personal experience and a rejection of the prejudices white Americans may have told them to hold.[82]

Jerry worked constructing tunnels for the city's water supply and these projects gave him cause for reflection on American workers and industry. He found the scale and foresight impressive, concluding that 'the United States, and New York, impossibilities don't come into their head at all, it comes in but is worked around and got out.' Over the course of his career he witnessed the implementation of greater automation and a decrease in the size of the necessary workforce. If not for his union membership this could have cost him his job: Jerry and his family returned to Ireland from 1977 to 1989, but towards the end of that period he realized he lacked sufficient savings for retirement and he went back to New York. He had paid his union dues during the intervening years and this enabled him to return to work in the tunnels. Despite the obvious difficulties of the sandhogs' labours underground, Jerry reflects positively on his experiences: 'I enjoyed New York. I think the United States is the greatest country in the world to work in and if I was going to work again I'd go back there. That's my opinion. Once I got myself straightened out things went forward. I did work hard there, parts of it, but that's part of life, you see, you have to take what comes and go with it.'

Women's Working Lives

In the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth the majority of Irish women migrating to the United States entered domestic service, a ubiquitous presence in the households of most major cities.[83] With the advent of electricity and labour-saving devices in private homes, the service industry declined. However, a number of young Irish women still took up these occupations, particularly when they first arrived and more noticeably in the Boston area, where they worked in wealthy homes in the Chestnut Hill neighbourhood. Mary Walsh's grandaunt sponsored her immigration in 1957 and helped her get her first job taking care of children:

> They were a Catholic family and there was a cook there from Gort. So, I was lucky I was made very comfortable. I worked a full six days. I wouldn't

[82] McCourt, *'Tis*, pp.153-4; Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé, *House Don't Fall on Me*, trans. Gabriel Fitzmaurice (Mercier Press, Cork, 2007), pp.176-7, 179, 198-200; Kearns Blain, *I Used to be Irish*, pp.75-8; Eileen Anderson, 'Irish New Yorkers and the Puerto Rican Migration', in Rogers & O'Brien (eds.), *After the Flood*, pp.92-7.

[83] Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930* (Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 2009); Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, 1983); Miller, *Ireland and Irish America*, pp.300-26.

> say it was hard, I was taking care of kids. There were four children. I'd start in the mornings at seven, get them ready for school. I did put the clothes away and take care of the rooms and the second floor. It was nice and comfortable, just very nice. We went to Hyannisport for the summer. I used to take them to the beach… When you live-in it's a little easier, but you have a longer day. Of course you're babysitting if the family goes out. But it's a long day for forty dollars a week. In the wealthy neighbourhoods everybody kept help. In the first job I had there were six of us close by.[84]

As she suggests, the 'live-in' nature of the job made it attractive in some ways (the ability to save more money and not have to find accommodation), but more difficult in others (longer work days). Francis Newall Coen also started her working life as a domestic:

> My first job was on Reservoir Avenue in Chestnut Hill for a family. They had three children and I was hired as a cook, at thirty dollars a week. Of course I didn't know the first thing about cooking, but I tell you, she taught me well. I lived there and had Thursdays off after I got breakfast, and a half day on Sunday. We worked very hard, because they entertained a lot and I'd be working until eleven at night sometimes. I stayed with them two and a half years then I worked for a Jewish family in Brookline… It was very confining with the children and I wanted to make more money.[85]

However, life was not all work and no fun and the women fondly remember their social lives, particularly going to Boston's Irish dance halls. All domestic servants had Thursdays off and they 'went into town, spent money, and went dancing'.[86] 'Maids Night Out' at the dance halls in Dudley Square every Thursday gave them an outlet for socializing and helped minimize the isolation they might have felt working in the houses of the wealthy.[87]

About a third of young Irish women worked in clerical positions (see Appendix 3, table 5). Mae O'Driscoll says she could have stayed in Ireland for a third-level education or a job in the civil service, but came to New York for 'an adventure' in 1958 at age eighteen. She recalls that at the time three main companies employed Irish women: Metropolitan Life Insurance, the New York Telephone Company, and Citi Bank. Her brother 'knew people' in two of these and within three weeks of arrival she had interviewed and received job offers from all three. She emphasizes not wanting to work at the telephone company and describes her interview there with a 'very nice Irish-American woman':

> The woman, very nice, I took whatever test it was, it was math and probably vocabulary… so she said to me, 'for a young girl from Ireland, you certainly

[84] In O'Carroll, *Models for Movers*, pp.71-2.
[85] Ibid., pp.75-6.
[86] Eileen Newall, in O'Carroll, *Models for Movers*, p.84.
[87] Gedutis, *See You at the Hall*, pp.82-5.

> did very well on the exam'. I was too shy to comment… She said she wouldn't hire me as a telephone operator because of my brogue, but there would definitely be a clerical position for me. Fine. I didn't say anything, I just listened. I told my brother [and] he was furious. He said, 'didn't you tell her we have schools in Ireland?' [*Laughs*] But that was the perception – that the Irish were uneducated.[88]

When asked why the company hired Irish women if they were uneducated, she responded, 'I think it was our work ethic'.[89] The telephone company's perception of young Irish women and her own relatively privileged background both fed into her desire to work elsewhere and hints at class divisions present beneath the surface.

Madge Ahern from Cork also came to America for a sense of adventure and spent a year taking care of children for a wealthy family in Boston and then a year working at the telephone company in New York, not sharing the same prejudices as Mae O'Driscoll. In 1963 she received sixty dollars a week in wages and recalls the 'freedom' it afforded her:

> It was very good and we'd electricity, or not electricity, telephone, we got that for half price… 'Twas very good that time in America, things were very cheap. The one thing I remember about [it was] apples, they were selling them out on the sidewalk, their stands outside, and you could get three and a half pounds of beautiful apples for twenty-five cents. You'd get a chicken, a grand plump chicken for a dollar. Clothes I remember I got a coat and a suit going home one evening from work, there was a sale on, this would be after the winter season and they'd be selling off, like they do here now, they'd sell off all their stuff at half price. It had to go anyway. I got this lovely kind of a bisque coloured coat, beautiful coat for twenty dollars, and the suit I think for fifteen, you know. 'Twas marvellous, 'twas marvellous for me going out from here and not having [spending money]. 'Twas marvellous, 'twas great, 'twas a great experience.[90]

She also enjoyed the work itself and the diversity of the workforce – Irish, Irish Americans, Italians, African Americans, and 'everything'.

> They [the company] were great, they were great really. Nine to five and you'd have a break in the morning and your lunch break, you know. Lovely. I loved it. I really loved it, dealing with people like that on the phone. Very interesting, you'd get very nice people on the phone. They'd know your accent. They were Irish or probably would have Irish connections an awful lot of them and they'd be asking where you came from and how you liked it, you know. 'Twas lovely. I loved it, I really loved it.[91]

Her 'brogue' seems to have been noticeable enough that customers commented on it, but it did not inhibit her receiving the job as a telephonist, as Mae O'Driscoll mentioned. The most striking of Madge's memories is of John F. Kennedy's

[88] Mae O'Driscoll, interview 18 Nov. 2005, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Madge Ahern, interview with Margaret Kearns, 29 Nov. 2001, WOHP UCC.
[91] Ibid.

assassination and the shock that came with it. As her statement 'they'd know your accent' suggests, the Irish in New York in the early '60s were both recognized and popular and Kennedy represented their success. Among the Irish community she says his death felt 'like if you heard from home that somebody had died belonging to you.'[92] American society's post-war success and the rise of the Irish within it made it seem like a land of almost boundless economic and social possibility for young Irish women.

Working for the 'American Dream'?

Most Irish immigrants in post-war America, as in earlier periods, arrived motivated by the hope of greater opportunities: a choice of career paths, spouses, places of residence, and forms of entertainment. The idea of pursuing personal success represents the classic 'American dream', but to what extent did these migrants find what they sought? Many issues complicated their search. Kevin Henry moved from place to place for several years in pursuit of high wages and good working conditions. Jerry Lynch eventually settled into a career as a New York City sandhog and learned not only about the hard work of digging tunnels, but also about racism and civil rights. Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé rose to a managerial position at Sears Roebuck in Chicago but left because of frustration with racial issues.[93] Another west Kerry migrant, Tomás Ó Cinnéide, ended up ill and homeless for a time in San Francisco, eventually returning to Ireland with assistance from a government scheme.[94] Madge Ahern's memories of her two years in America bubble with her enthusiasm for the personal freedoms she had, though family obligations drew her back to Ireland, curtailing her hope of moving on to San Francisco.[95] Mae O'Driscoll went on to earn a college degree in accounting and had a successful career with J.P Morgan, though she experienced gender discrimination there.[96] Both Francis Newall Coen and Mary Walsh emphasized their lack of schooling in Ireland and how it

[92] Madge Ahern, interview with Margaret Kearns, 29 Nov. 2001, WOHP UCC. Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé recalled the moment he heard the news of Kennedy's death and said, '*bhíos-sa féin chomh trína chéile mar gheall ar an eachtra agus dá mba mo dheartháir féin a bheadh ann'* ['I was as upset because of his death as if it was my own brother']. Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé, *A Thig Ná Tit Orm* (C.J. Fallon, Dublin, 1997), p.170; Ó Sé, *House Don't Fall on Me*, p.218.
[93] Ó Sé, *A Thig Ná Tit Orm*, pp.173-4; Ó Sé, *House Don't Fall on Me*, pp.223-4.
[94] Tomás Ó Cinnéide, *Ar Seachrán* (An Sagart, Maigh Nuad, 1990), pp.139-46; Tomás Ó Cinnéide, *The Wild Rover: The Autobiography of Tomás Ó Cinnéide*, trans. by Pádraig Tyers (Mercier Press, Cork, 1997), pp.154-62.
[95] Madge Ahern, interview with Margaret Kearns, 29 Nov. 2001, WOHP UCC.
[96] Mae O'Driscoll, interview 18 Nov. 2005, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.

influenced their views of the importance of education for their children.[97] While all these migrants may have arrived with similar preconceptions and goals, over time their diverse experiences led them to develop more nuanced views of American society and its divisions.

IV. Music & Social Life

Mick Moloney writes that the 1950s 'were by all accounts bad times for Irish music in America'; it 'went into progressive decline' and 'retreated from public view'.[98] However, closer examination of sources – including Moloney's interviews, my oral histories, and other collections – suggests a situation with considerable variation across place and time. Perceived attitudes towards traditional music among the Irish and Irish-American populations, avenues for performance, the forms it took, and the rise and fall of its fortunes depended on the demographic, geographic, and work environments outlined above, as well as personal factors and preferences. Musicians and performers, because they represented the public face of their culture, had to confront conflicting conceptions of Irishness and their choices regarding performance contexts reflect this.

Mike Rafferty arrived in New York in 1949 and felt that 'music was slack' at the time and while Jack Coen, who came in the same year, articulated a similar sentiment, he admits, 'there was a lot of musicians around, but I never came into contact with them. And they weren't going around in the same circles that I was going around in.'[99] Kevin Henry says of Chicago, ''twas at a very low steam when I came here. I came here in 1956 and I thought there'd be a lot of musicians here on account of [Francis] O'Neill. It turned out there was hardly nobody.' Boston in the 1950s, by contrast, seemed lively and Larry Reynolds recalls, 'Dudley Street was a mecca of music and it was a place where there was at least 2,000 people any given night, anywhere from 1,500 to 2,000 people at the various dance halls and of course they were coming together meeting and marrying and all this stuff. It was a mecca

[97] Emphasis on the importance of education for women is a theme throughout the interviews in O'Carroll, *Models for Movers*.
[98] Moloney, 'Irish Music in America', 534. He makes a similar assertion in 'Acculturation, Assimilation and Revitalisation: Irish Music in Urban America, 1960-1996', in F. Vallely, H. Hamilton, E. Vallely & L. Doherty (eds.), *Crosbhealach an Cheoil = The Crossroads Conference 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music* (Whinstone Music, Dublin, 1999), p.125.
[99] Mike Rafferty, interview with Jo Reed 16 Sept. 2010, audio podcast; Jack Coen, interview with Mick Moloney, 28 Feb. 1976, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

for music and entertainment and also camaraderie.'[100] Outside the dance halls immigrants also immersed themselves in music clubs and house parties.

While the concentration or spread of the Irish population in these cities influenced the shape of the music scene, individual musicians also had different expectations and preferences: some, including Larry Reynolds, willingly adapted to performing a hybridized style of music that encompassed the traditional and the modern for the dance halls; others, including Jack Coen, seemed to resent this position and chose to stop playing almost entirely for a time; a few, like Kevin Henry and Larry Reynolds, got involved in actively promoting traditional music to ensure its continuation; while others, like Mike Rafferty, played less music in order to devote time to establishing careers and families. There was no single experience of Irish music and culture in post-war America and this section addresses both its common themes and rich variety. Ó hAllmhuráin argues, 'what made Irish traditional music in America different was the sheer scale of the New World *habitus*. Immigrant music-makers encountered a vast topography of performance settings from the intensely private to the overtly public and unfamiliar.'[101] The former – homes and music clubs – suited traditional music-making best, providing a refuge from audience tastes, while the latter – dance halls and pubs – tended to feature hybrid and modern styles, which some musicians rejected. The varied options meant that in urban centres just about anyone looking to hear, play, or dance to Irish music could find something they liked.

Music and dancing constitute two of the many avenues for social life in this period. Jimmy O'Brien describes the vibrant Irish community in New York and all it offered:

> The sessions in New York were great. I met some great musicians over like Jack Coen and Paddy O'Brien and Andy McGann and Paddy Reynolds and all this. And the New York Céilí Band. I often visited (I knew Paddy O'Brien well) when they'd be rehearsing and I'll tell you, you wouldn't be in any hurry home after listening to them. The hospitality in America and the Irish, you know, it's great. And the people, American people are great, no problem getting on with them. But the music that was played in America – unbelievable. And of course, you'd meet so many from your own locality and you mightn't have met them for maybe a few months. 'Did you hear from home?' that'd be the first thing. And they'd say 'I'm hoping to go back at Christmas' and all this kind. Some people did go back and more of them didn't. I suppose, it kept the Irish together. The GAA in America, it was great. There was Gaelic Park and you could go every Sunday to Gaelic Park

[100] Larry Reynolds, interview with Scott Alarik, 19 Nov. 2009, NEFMA.
[101] Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Dance Halls of Romance and Culchies in Tuxedos', p.11.

> and there was a game there. There was a bar and restaurant on the grounds and you could get corned beef and cabbage and bacon and cabbage any Sunday up there. It was really great. I mightn't be always off Sundays but I think that was a very important part of keeping the Irish together. Then each county of course would have their own organization. The Kerryman's Association, the Corkman's Association, and they'd have their own annual social, we'll call it. All these things helped to keep the Irish together. But the music was a big factor. If you didn't play the games, which I didn't, I still went to all the games in Gaelic Park on Sunday when I possibly could, but there was great music even played in the pubs… The hospitality was great… That was one of the big factors in America, that the Irish stuck together, and if you behaved at all you were great.

He continuously emphasizes 'hospitality': the way in which the Irish helped each other and those who had lived in the city for many years would invite newer migrants to their homes. Both music and formal organizations such as the GAA and county associations provided focal points for social life and even if, like Jimmy, you did not play music or Gaelic games, you received a warm welcome. The extent of the networks that developed in this way could astonish Americans, as Peggy Tanner recounts:

> Dances were great places for meeting. Every county had its annual ball. The Kerryman's Ball was held at the Manhattan Center on West 34th Street… The first time I took my husband, who was then my boyfriend, to a Kerryman's Ball he was astounded. How did I, a newcomer to New York, know so many people? He, who had lived there all his life, did not have nearly such a vast number of acquaintances.[102]

In cities across America these consciously Irish venues and occasions – house parties, music and social clubs, dances – played important roles in the integration of new arrivals into established communities and the maintenance of their ethnic identity over time. Music, adapted to its new urban setting, served as a 'bonding mechanism', but one with a 'wider social and cultural role'.[103]

Private Music-Making

As Jimmy O'Brien hints, much music-making took place in homes. Later in the interview he described how these gatherings unfolded:

> I sang at parties… They'd be all the old songs. The songs you'd hear at a party in New York that time, they' be all songs about home, you know. Somebody would sing a song about his own area and he wouldn't be doing Frank Sinatra or anything like that now, 'twould be all good funny songs and there'd be football songs, songs about the Kerry and Cork teams and

[102] Peggy Tanner, 'Memory Lane: The '50s, Sewing, and Politics', *New York Irish History*, vol.15 (2001), p.20.
[103] Lee, *Making the Irish American*, p.29; Méabh Ní Fhuatháin, 'O'Byrne De Witt and Copley Records: A Window on Irish Music Recording in the USA 1900-1965' (MA thesis, University College Cork, 1993), p.132.

> Cavan teams, and that's the kind of, the social life was great there. Everyone would bring a little bottle with him, you know… There was [a lot of parties], house parties were great. There'd be fellows after arriving out, a new recruit, and they'd be trying to boost you up a bit. Then there'd be fellows leaving and coming home, you know. And 'twas the first time I heard about a stag party, but they had such a thing alright and they'd take fellows out like that. There was house parties, 'twas like the house parties I told you about would be in the wintertime in the country places like Sliabh Luachra and all over, it wasn't any different.

The last sentence illustrates how he equates informal private gatherings in New York with the traditions of rural Ireland. Jack Coen, as mentioned above, expressed disappointment that upon his arrival in New York in 1949 he encountered very little music. In retrospect, when asked why he could not find other musicians and where they might have been, he said, 'I think they played in their own homes… And they had their own little sessions. And if you happened to meet them, you were very lucky. But I didn't even know about them. I didn't know where they lived or where they played; they certainly didn't play out in pubs, because I didn't hear them.'[104] His frustration led him to consider returning to Ireland to avoid having to 'sacrifice' his love of music.[105] However, many musicians did manage to find each other and house parties were made possible in cities like New York, Boston and Chicago because Irish Americans and earlier generations of migrants had become homeowners. House sessions and parties differentiate the development of Irish music in America from its counterpart in Britain in this era, because there a housing shortage combined with the young, highly mobile migrant population meant that few owned their own homes (see Chapter 4).

In Boston, these parties earned the name 'kitchen rackets', because, as in rural Ireland, dancing tended to happen in the kitchen. Jack Conroy says his Galway-born parents told him about these events in the 1920s and '30s and in his own youth he remembers:

> Through marriage relations we had a lot of people from Carna coming into the house. Sunday seemed to be the day where after mass people would be coming by and we weren't too far from the church. We would have singers coming in, they'd have step-dancing, the men would get up and do the sean-nós step-dancing on the floor. I'm the oldest of seven children – we'd all be on the stairs peeking our heads over looking at them. So I grew up in a house of Irish music really.

[104] Jack Coen, interview with Mick Moloney, 28 Feb. 1976, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[105] Tim Collins, ''Tis Like They Never Left: Locating "Home" in the Music of Sliabh Aughty's Diaspora', *Journal of the Society for American Music*, vol.4, no.4 (2010), p.498.



Image 3.1: Music in the house, Boston, c.1965: Tommy Sheridan, Jimmy and Eamon Marshall, unknown fiddle player. Photograph courtesy of Tommy Sheridan.

While the gatherings Jack describes seem informal, for special events larger parties took place. Accordion player Joe Derrane, born in Boston to Irish parents, was a fixture of the Irish music scene and recalls of the 1940s and '50s:

> Money was very tight, so little weddings, anniversaries, christenings, any occasion for a party would take place in the home and what they'd do was take the kitchen table and chairs and everything out of the kitchen because almost all the kitchens had linoleum coverings on the floors, you couldn't go dancing on the hardwood floors or dancing on the rugs, so all the music and the dancing took place in the kitchen and it became known as kitchen rackets. Jerry O'Brien used to be playing those in the '40s and when I started to be able to play a few tunes half-decently Jerry would take me out with him to kind of break me in. He'd play for an hour and then he'd give me the box and he'd sit me in the corner and say 'alright, now play such-and-such, that's too fast, that's too slow, that's good' and let them dance. I remember, there was a night where it was so crowded in there, there was no room, couldn't play in the kitchen, but they had a little front porch right in front of the kitchen, so what they did was open up the window and put a chair for me up on the porch and I played through the window! It worked. Then there was another night, this is the strangest of all, but this is true. They kept moving me from one corner to another, they decided they want to do set-dancing so they start swinging around in the kitchen, you're fair game, they'd squash you. So they'd keep 'well, put him in this corner, move him back a little' then they wanted to get more people in. Next thing you know they had me up on the counter alongside the sink and you were sitting on the edge of the counter and you'd be playing but they'd keep hitting the feet and you were always stopping because you were going to go off. Finally, I got disgusted with that and I says 'bloody hell, I'm not going to go

> through this,' so I took off the shoes and socks, swung my feet around, put them in the sink, and I played the rest of the job with my feet in the sink! For safety! They didn't mind at all. I'm sure there was no harm in it.[106]

While the dancing went on in the kitchen tea and food would be set out in the parlour and in another room a game of cards or a singing session might take place.

Felix Dolan, piano player and child of migrants from Leitrim and Mayo, recalls similar gatherings growing up in the Bronx in an area then populated primarily by Irish, Jewish, and Italian families:

> They [my parents] enjoyed the music. They enjoyed the music in the house too because we used to practice in my house a lot because we had a piano in my house. Well, I say in our house, it was an apartment. We had five-room apartment in Highbridge on University Avenue and we were on the ground floor. The neighbours were really very good because we made a lot of noise. To us it was music but to other people it had to be noise and we weren't always that prudent about how late we played and so forth. We had a good number of parties! Not kids, not youngsters, my parents and everybody would come and play and dance. That required a good deal of patience on their part. And they were very good, in all fairness the neighbours were very good. Most of them were Irish really.[107]

As these stories suggest, house parties stand out in the memories of both newly arrived migrants and the children of earlier generations, which indicates they had two important roles in America: first, welcoming new members into the Irish community, and second, the continuation of Irish cultural practices within that community across generations. While public venues also took on these functions, their commercialism highlighted tensions between international popular culture and ethnic traditions as well as regional and class differences among the Irish.

Public Venues

Ethnic dance halls existed from the first decades of the twentieth century, connected to the rise of commercial leisure.[108] For the Irish in the immediate post-war era they were important social institutions where newly arrived immigrants got to know the community and established networks.[109] They also served practical functions: you were sure to meet someone you knew from home, someone who could get you a job, or someone who could find you lodgings. As the backdrop for

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[106] Joe Derrane, interview with Brian Lawlor, 25 April 2002, Irish Music Center, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
[107] Felix Dolan, interview with Virginia Ferris, 25 Feb. 2011, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.
[108] Randy McBee, *Dance Hall Days: Intimacy and Leisure among Working-Class Immigrants in the United States* (New York University Press, New York & London, 2000), p.3.
[109] Mick Moloney, 'Irish Dance Bands in America', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, vol.2, no.3 (Autumn 1998), p.131.

these purposes, dance halls provided a hybrid mix of music styles, something between the old world and new – an intermediary space. Patrons came predominantly (but not exclusively) from the Irish-born or second-generation population. The halls were generally located within Irish-dominated neighbourhoods: in Boston, all five main dance halls in the 1950s stood in close proximity in Dudley Square, an Irish area near the terminus for the city's tram lines, making them easily accessible to anyone living or working in other parts of the city. In Chicago and New York the halls had a wider geographical spread, but one related to the distribution of the Irish population. Most dance halls refrained from serving alcohol until the mid-'60s, though a pub was never far away and many men stopped there before the dance. Migrants would hardly have expected a replica of what they knew at home in Ireland but these venues offered enough of the familiar (in music, dancing, and patrons) to make them feel comfortable, and enough that differed (a cosmopolitan aura and popular American music and dances) for them to feel part of the lifestyle of the urban centres.

Commercial Irish dance halls usually offered some combination of 'modern' (popular) music and céilí music. This meant that performance groups took one of three forms: First, a 'mixed' group with musicians to play both genres (saxophones, brass, fiddles, accordions, etc.). Often called 'orchestras', these were most common in the 1920s through the immediate post-war period. Second, two separate bands that took turns on stage, with perhaps forty minutes of modern music and then twenty minutes of traditional dance music provided by a smaller group, usually headed by an accordion player, while the modern band took a break. Last, the larger halls had separate rooms, with one featuring predominantly modern music and the other featuring Irish music and céilí dancing. One of the two latter practices became the norm in the 1950s and '60s and could depend on the size of the particular venue.

Union regulations at least partially influenced the development of these formats.[110] Louis Quinn recalls the rules in New York in the 1930s:

[110] Unions mentioned in interviews include: Musicians' Union in New York, Local 802; American Federation of Musicians, Local 77 in Philadelphia; and the Irish Musicians' Union in Philadelphia (active from the 1920s to 1960s). Jerry Lynch, interview with the author, 20 Nov. 2010; Kevin Henry, interview with the author, 19 April 2013; Tommy Caulfield, interview with Mick Moloney, 10 May 1976, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; John Vesey, interview with Mick Moloeny, 8 Jan. 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; Louis Quinn, interview with Mick Moloney, 17 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; Felix Dolan, interview with Virginia Ferris, 25 Feb. 2011, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU. According to Joe Derrane, Irish dance hall musicians in Boston remained un-unionized. Joe Derrane, interview with Susan Gedutis, 5 Nov. 1999.

> The orchestras were much bigger at that time, you know. If you wanted to get a job the union held control over the number of men you could use in certain places and you had to go in with a full complement of men there in order to be within the rules of the union, you know. It was nothing unusual to have ten, twelve, fourteen, sixteen men on a job… I'll tell you one way we'd handle it. You'd pick out about four good traditional musicians, four that were good on traditional music. You might get a piano player that could alternate. A good pianist would play the orchestration and then he'd switch over and could chord for the Irish music. The drummer probably did the same thing. You might get a clarinet player that would also was playing in a modern band, so we alternated.[111]

The traditional musicians who could read music or learned to play popular modern dances would 'alternate' and the musicians from the 'modern' side of things would often play the Irish tunes from written notation. Later, the influence of union regulations seems to have switched from a focus on the number of musicians to their allotted breaks. Irish venues adapted: a modern band played for forty minutes and then a smaller group of Irish musicians took the stage for twenty. Jerry Lynch played accordion in the Red Mill dance hall in New York under this setup in the early '60s: 'That started off anyway, it was going for three and four nights a week and it turned out that I played in that, just the traditional music. There was a jazz band playing there and every half an hour or three-quarters of an hour they took a break and I played for twenty minutes, three of us, piano accordion, myself, and a drum.' This format suited some people very well: Felix Dolan played for the traditional dances and used the forty minutes in between sets to do his college homework![112]

Audience preferences determined the privileging of American popular music over Irish traditional. Accordion player Joe Madden arrived in New York from east Galway in 1959 and he suggests that, in the interests of commercial viability, he let the the audience dictate the style of music he played: 'what we tried to do was we had gigs going down in the hotels in the city now, we'll say, where you had half Americans [and] half Irish, there was no way in hell that you could go in and play traditional music all night, you had to play the Irish-American music too, otherwise they didn't want you.'[113] He implies that Irish-Americans showed a marked preference for American music, but in dance halls where the Irish-born predominated, modern music also took precedence, suggesting it had less to do with place of upbringing than associations. Louis Quinn, who had lived in New York

[111] Louis Quinn, interview with Mick Moloney, 17 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[112] Felix Dolan, interview with Virginia Ferris, 25 Feb. 2011, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.
[113] Joe Madden, interview with Mick Moloney, 13 Aug. 1985, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

since the 1930s, felt that the post-war generation cared little for traditional music: 'the majority of the Irish emigrants coming out here, you know, wanted no part of it, they didn't want to hear traditional music. It was bog music, it was coming from the mountains, who wanted to associate themselves with that, you know. A lot of the Irish lads were ashamed to be associated with either with the playing of traditional music or listening to it or dancing to it.'[114]

Traditional music, as discussed in Chapter 2, had class-based associations that migrants carried with them across the Atlantic. To illustrate this point Louis tells a story about a dance in Chicago in the late 1950s:

> We were in the hall for quite a while and they were dancing rock'n'roll and to look at the crowd there seventy percent were Irish-born. And I called Pat Roche and I said, 'what's the matter that you don't play some Irish music for these people?' He said, 'they won't dance it,' he says. I said, 'what do you mean they won't dance it? You're not playing it for them.' Eleanor Kane was playing there that night and Johnny McGreevy. He says, 'you think so?' So I said, 'I'm sure'. So he says, 'alright,' he says, 'I'll show you something,' he says. 'I'll do something here,' he says now, when they were having a bit of speaking, he says, 'after the speaking is over I'll get up and make an announcement for a sixteen-hand reel' or Siege of Ennis or something like this, and we'll see what the reaction is to it. You know, he did just what I had said and started to play the sixteen-hand reel. Do you know there was eight couples went out and Roche came back to me and he says, 'there you are,' he says, 'six of them were born in Chicago,' he says, 'you got two people born in Ireland.'[115]

Post-war migrants had listened to American popular music on radio and records before they left Ireland and no doubt wanted to participate in that aspect of urban culture in their new place of settlement.[116] Despite the fact that some seemed to reject Irish traditional music, attitudes changed over time and Martin Mulhaire insists that 'there was always an audience for it,' but finding that audience could mean looking beyond the major commercial venues.[117]

A combination of these factors produced a markedly different sound in Irish dance halls in America compared to their counterparts in Ireland. Larry Reynolds arrived in Boston from Ahascragh, Co. Galway in 1953 and says initially, 'I didn't

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[114] Louis Quinn, interview with Mick Moloney, 17 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[115] Louis Quinn, interview with Mick Moloney, 17 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU. Pat Roche was an influential Irish dancing teacher in Chicago; Chicago-born Eleanor Kane Neary was accomplished at playing Irish music on piano; and Johnny McGreevy, also Chicago-born, was a fiddler.
[116] Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Dance Halls of Romance and Culchies in Tuxedos', p.13; Gedutis, *See You at the Hall*, p.70.
[117] Martin Mulhaire, interview with Mick Moloney, 5 Dec. 1981, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

care for it, to be honest with you, when I came here. It took me a while to acquire a taste for it. It was different than what we had listened to at home, you know.'[118] Similarly, Joe Madden recalls, 'when I heard the style of music that was here I stuck the old accordion under the bed and I didn't take it out for a whole year!'[119] He eventually recovered from his initial shock and went on to actively participate in the New York Irish music scene. Jerry Lynch says on his arrival in 1959 'we played a lot of music and I enjoyed it but it was different altogether, a different scene in New York, the dance halls. It was a different feeling when you were over there first but then you got used to it, you acclimatized.' The process of 'acclimatizing' lies at the heart of the adoption or modification of a new identity. Jerry's view also reflects his general feeling towards migration: he had a hard time getting work upon his arrival and says he would have returned to Ireland at once if he could have. However, despite their reservations, musicians who did find opportunities to play expressed gratitude for that and managed to adjust to the new urban feel.



Image 3.2: Advertisement for the City Center Ballroom, New York City, 1961. Note the string of shamrocks that form the border around the ad. Source: Joe Burke Archive, NUIG.

New York City had several dance halls in the post-war era, spread out across the city. The most famous were the Jaeger House on 86th Street and Lexington, the Red Mill on 173rd Street and Jerome Avenue (opened c.1963), the Tuxedo on 86th

[118] Paddy Cronin arrived in Boston from Co. Kerry in 1949 and attributes the differences primarily to tempo and instrumentation: 'there was a big difference because they played much faster… [and] there was more accordion players here, much more than there was in Ireland in them days.' Paddy Cronin & Johnny O'Leary interview with Maggie Holsburg, 20 June 2000, Gaelic Roots Collection, Irish Music Centre, John. J. Burns Library, Boston College.
[119] Joe Madden, interview with Mick Moloney, 13 Aug. 1985, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

Street at 3rd and Lexington Avenue, and the City Center Ballroom at 135 West 55th Street (opened 1956, see image 3.2). Mattie Connolly remembers the vibrancy of this scene:

> That was the weekend thing. That was the place to go, and that was the thing to do. You'd look forward to Friday, Saturday and Sunday. You always had a society-type band, or a dance-type band, and in addition to that, you'd always have a céilí unit, like a three-piece céilí unit – accordion, drums and piano, or accordion, drums and guitar. Generally that was the line-up of the céilí group. Sometimes it was a quartet, but more often a trio. And the City Center was… there was nothing [like it] to see 2,000 or 2,500 young Irish people enjoying themselves there on a Saturday night, having a good time – boys and girls from all across Ireland. You had about nine dancehalls that were going full-swing – bands and céilí units in every one of them.[120]

Though a traditional musician originally, he and Martin Mulhaire founded the Majestic Showband in December 1963. Showbands played covers of popular songs while also providing an entertaining 'show'. They had gained popularity in Ireland from the late '50s and were in full swing there and in Irish venues in Britain and America by the 1960s.[121] Moving into the showband circuit, and away from the traditional, allowed Connolly and Mulhaire to still play predominantly for Irish audiences while also making a living from music. By contrast, Jerry Lynch, who featured on the traditional side of the dance halls and played a hybrid mix of styles for weddings and other occasions, says 'music's the great sideline at any time,' but full time, 'I wouldn't take it if it was left down on the plate'. Both the popular and traditional genres had a recognizably Irish flavour that created an environment of friendly familiarity.

While Kevin Henry felt that Chicago had few traditional musicians when he arrived in 1956, Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé, in his first forays into the music scene there, compared it favourably to London and quickly picked up engagements to play for dances.[122] Kevin plays flute and uilleann pipes, instruments associated solely with the traditional style, while Maidhc Dainín played accordion, common in both traditional and modern bands, and this, along with their personal preferences, may account for their differences in opinion. Chicago in the 1950s had eight or nine dance halls and three get frequent mention: the Keyman's Club on West Madison, owned by Bill

[120] Mattie Connolly, interview with Mick Moloney, undated, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[121] Miller, 'Irish Traditional and Popular Music in New York City', pp.495-6. Rebecca S. Miller, 'Roseland, Jetland, Cloudland, and Beyond: Irish Showbands and Economic Change, 1958-1975', *New Hibernia Review*, vol.18, no.3 (Autumn 2014), pp.77-92.
[122] Ó Sé, *A Thig Ná Tit Orm*, p.134, 143; Ó Sé, *House Don't Fall on Me*, pp.171-2, 183.

Fuller (who also operated venues in New York, London, and San Francisco); Jack Hanley's House of Happiness on West 79th Street; and the Harp and Shamrock at Halsted and 54th Street.[123] Kevin Henry recalled of the latter: 'they had two old-timers playing in the back on a Saturday night, and they used to dance the sets and the old-time waltzes and the Stack of Barleys in the old-fashioned ways… It was a great place for a session… Everybody loved the music because everybody had plenty of money at that time.'[124] However, apart from the back room American popular tastes seem to have prevailed.[125] Kevin also worked for a time as a bartender in the Keyman's Club and spoke unfavourably of the experience: 'the tips weren't good. Fifteen dollars a night for three hours, but you had to work your finger to the bone for four or five hundred people them all wanting it *right now!* [*Laughs*].' A perceived lack of interest in traditional music pushed musicians to look for alternatives, leading to the foundation of the Irish Musicians' Association of America (organized by Chicago-based Frank Thornton) and a proliferation of music in pubs in the 1960s.

In the 1950s when the Irish music scenes in New York and Chicago seemed to have passed their heyday, Boston held on to its vitality. It had a geographical focal point in Dudley Square, Roxbury on the south side of the city, which was home to a public transportation terminus, five dance halls, and the O'Byrne DeWitt travel agency and record store.[126] It fulfils Conzen's definition of the ethnic neighbourhood as 'a central place, conveniently located for the concentration of specialized services patronized by group members resident throughout the city.'[127] New migrants entered the community via the venues on Dudley Street. Larry Reynolds recalls going to a dance with his brother the night he arrived from Ireland in 1953. Each of the five dance halls drew a following among migrants from certain regions: the Dudley Street Opera house had a Kerry crowd; Winslow Hall had a following from Connaught;

[123] McCullough identifies nineteen Irish venues (taverns and/or dance halls) in Chicago in the 1950s and '60s. 'Irish Music in Chicago', pp.376-7.
[124] Kevin Henry, quoted in McCullough, 'Irish Music in Chicago', p.42.
[125] Michael D. Nicholsen, '"Auld Sod" and New Turf: Entertainment, Nationalism, and Identity in the Irish Traditional Music Community of Chicago, 1868-1999' (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2007), pp.228-9.
[126] Susan Gedutis has extensively documented this era in her book *See You at the Hall*. She had access to many interviewees who have since passed on, but her book has weaknesses when it comes to historical context and analysis of the divisions within the city's Irish community, particularly issues of class, respectability, and negative associations of traditional music with poverty.
[127] Kathleen Neils Conzen, 'Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity: Historical Issues', *The Journal of American History*, vol.66, no.3 (Dec. 1979), p.606.

and the Rose Croix drew in Scots and migrants from Canada's maritime provinces as well as the Irish;[128] the largest and most popular halls, the Intercolonial and the Hibernian, had a mix of patrons. The latter two venues had multiple ballrooms within the same building, each with varying styles of music. The largest room on the top floor featured popular Irish and American music with only the occasional céilí dance, while one of the smaller rooms downstairs had traditional music. Brendan Tonra succinctly stated the difference in their respective audiences: 'the real Irish stayed with the céilí band. The big shots were upstairs with the fox-trots.'[129] The 'real Irish' were the working-class men and women from the west of Ireland, while the 'big shots' implies upwardly mobile Irish and Irish-Americans. This division had its basis in rural/urban and class divides in Ireland.

In all the halls, the owners or managers attempted to cater to Irish and Irish-American tastes and the most successful bands and musicians were adept at both styles, such as Joe Derrane.[130] Jack Conroy learned accordion from the same teacher as Derrane and recalls his time playing in the halls in the early '50s:

> I was in Boston College from '50 to '54, my [accordion] teacher Jerry O'Brien I think one of the last lessons I had with him he said 'Jack' he says 'I have a job for you.' I was terrified, I said, 'I'm not going to play up in a hall, I'm not able to do that,' I was just terrified, I was kind of bashful. He says, 'you're ready if I say you're ready' he says, 'so I want you to go down as a favour to me now, I already told them, I spoke well of you, I want you to go down.' So I was sent down to the old Opera House on Dudley Street where they had a dance on Saturday night and that was my first kind of ballroom experience where they weren't really doing a lot of session tunes, it was strictly dance tempos, polkas, they'd do a modern set, highland flings, they would do a Siege of Ennis, but the crowd they were going for dancing they weren't going to listen to session music… My first job there with the band, I was a freshman in college, I walked in eight o'clock at the old Opera House, went up the stairs and who's sitting up in the front leading the band but Joe Derrane, so again, I see Joe Derrane and I was too bashful to speak to him, I didn't sit next to him, I sat down the line and of course the fact that my teacher had asked me to go down to play with the band, I did it to please him more than anything else. So for four years I got into the band work and then I played with Billy Caples and Martin Flaherty… I went with them for about a year. I think that band dissolved and then I went with the Johnny Powell band at the big ballroom up in the Hibernian Hall. With Johnny Powell we played every Thursday and we played every Saturday night and Johnny at that time was doing three, four, or five weddings on a weekend, the Irish couples getting married. I'm in college trying to keep up with my

[128] In all other cities mentions of the Irish socializing with other immigrant groups are rare, so the Rose Croix seems an exception, perhaps accounted for by the fact that many Canadians had Irish roots and were Catholic.
[129] Brendan Tonra, interview with Susan Gedutis, 18 Nov. 1999, quoted in Gedutis, *See You at the Hall*, p.67.
[130] Gedutis, *See You at the Hall*, p.68.

> studies and here I am playing Thursday night and then Saturday afternoon a wedding, Saturday night playing in the ballroom, Sunday afternoon a wedding, Sunday night in the ballroom. I was having a hard time trying to keep up with the studies. So I had four years of that.

For someone who claimed to be stage-shy, Jack had quite a successful career in the dance halls! Whether playing popular or traditional music, in the dead of winter or in sweltering summers, the bands always turned out in tuxedos, a sign of their professionalism, as pictured below (image 3.3).



Image 3.3: The Tara Céilí Band, Boston, c.1959: Terry Landers (accordion), George Shanley (drums), Brendan Tonra (fiddle), Larry Reynolds (fiddle), Frank Neylon (flute), Mickey Connolly (accordion), and Tom Garvey (piano). Photograph courtesy of Karin Joyce.

Patrons did not only come to the halls to dance; they also came to surround themselves with a familiar ethnic community. This social aspect influenced how relationships developed, particularly in regard courtship and marriage.[131] Choosing marriage partners constituted an exercise in personal liberation from the constraints of Irish society, as well as a possible alleviation for homesickness or loneliness. Not only had migrants escaped from parental matchmaking efforts, but Larry Reynolds also commented on the array of potential partners compared to rural Ireland:

> You know, where I came from in the country we'd go to a dance and there'd be about four guys to one woman and they were very selective. If you went

[131] McBee, *Dance Hall Days*, p.11.

> to ask them for a dance they'd look up and down at you and probably if they didn't like the way you had your hair combed they'd say no and wouldn't mind doing it. When I came here [to Boston] and went in to Dudley Street, the women, the finest looking women you ever saw, ten deep and they'd be there all night and they wouldn't get a dance or anything.

Many migrants chose to exercise their choice from within the confines of the ethnic group, marrying a partner from their local area or county in Ireland; 'therefore, in addition to promoting personal liberation, the ethnic dance hall was also an institution that encouraged social and cultural continuity.'[132] Numerous young, single migrants who met at dances and decided to get married had benefits for musicians and Joe Derrane recalls, 'there was an enormous amount of weddings that came about from people that met in those halls and went there regularly thereafter and kept going maybe until the family started. I'll give you a guess as to who got all the wedding work! We were doing three weddings on a Saturday and maybe one or two on a Sunday in addition to the Saturday night ballroom.'[133]

Kevin Henry and his wife Pauline met at an Irish dance hall in Chicago in 1958 and they describe, humorously, how their courtship began:

> PAULINE: I only came out on vacation. My brother was here at the time and he was going back so he said 'oh come out for vacation.' He sent me the money and out I went to spend New Year's Eve with them. The rest is history!
>
> KEVIN: The shoe met the stocking.
>
> PAULINE: I met the charming [man] and I said to him, I used to say to him, in our time we called it a line, when you were going out with someone, you might never have heard that expression… So I said to Kevin, 'now this is not going to be a long line because I'm going back at the end of the year and my sister and I ('twas a Marian year) we're going to Fatima, I'm going home and we're going to Fatima, just in case you get any notions.' So he said, 'no worry at all, I'm going to California.' And he said he was. He had travelled, he was a rolling stone, he had done a lot of travelling, which I envied… But that's the one who came out 55 years ago and you're looking at her, for a vacation! [*General laughter*]
>
> KEVIN: And I asked her for an old time waltz.
>
> PAULINE: [*Laughs*] You did, I always remember. You came over to me because I was with my brother and his girlfriend and I remember and you came over like this to me and you said 'do you dance?' and I did, because my brother and his girlfriend, I was sitting with them. It was an old theatre once that they turned into [a dance hall], the big bands came out that time, this was 195–

[132] Moloney, 'Irish Dance Bands in America', p.131. Marriage could be a way to re-establish family and community ties that had been lost in the trans-Atlantic journey. McBee, *Dance Hall Days*, p.34.
[133] Joe Derrane, interview with Brian Lawlor, 25 April 2002, Irish Music Center, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.

> KEVIN: ’58.
>
> PAULINE: ’58, February ’58 I met you. So I was sitting down with my brother and sister and girlfriend and I was saying, critiquing everyone that came in the door and I’d say ‘that fellow’s really –’ and ‘this one is that –’ and ‘that girl –’ and we were on a great blast. So Kevin came through the door and he had a white collar over his shirt, over his jacket, and I said ‘now there’s the most Irish fellow I’ve seen come in the door tonight’ and they laughed and said ‘you can’t sit up here all night talking to us, come on down and mingle.’ I was a pioneer then. ‘Come down to the bar.’ And that’s where the shoe met the stocking! [*General laughter*]
>
> KEVIN: I said to her, the first thing I said to her was ‘do you come here often?’ [*Laughs*] Which is the usual to get the spake going.

One old-time waltz changed the course of history! They married in Ireland in 1960 and consequently Kevin never went to California and Pauline settled with him in Chicago. This illustrates a potential of oral histories: they offer access not only to what did happen, but also to what might have happened.[134] Stories abound of Irish couples meeting and marrying in similar fashion.

Over time, the dance halls gradually lost their allure and their audience. In Boston many factors influenced the end of Dudley Square’s heyday: the New State Ballroom opened across the city; pubs introduced music and dancing; immigration from Ireland slowed; the post-war migrants got married and started having families, spending less time out dancing; and a demographic shift saw the Irish move out to the suburbs and the neighbourhood of Roxbury develop an African-American majority.[135] Despite the gradual development of these trends, the end seemed to take the Irish community by surprise: ‘we finally reached the point where because of the change in demographics and the area started to become run down, a lot of the girls were very uncomfortable now walking from Dudley Street down to these various halls, they just were very uncomfortable with the kind of people that were hanging around. That whole area then became totally run down… [It happened] almost overnight.’[136] During riots related to the Civil Rights movements in 1968, Mickey Connolly was playing in the Intercolonial with Brendan Tonra when an armed man entered and told them to get out. He said afterwards, ‘we never went back to Dudley

[134] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p.50

[135] Overall, the Boston Irish had lower rates of suburbanization than their counterparts in New York and Chicago. Winsberg writes that ‘Irish neighborhoods in Boston have been far less subjected to invasion and succession by blacks and Hispanics than neighborhoods in Chicago and New York’, but one exception to this was Roxbury. ‘The Suburbanization of the Irish in Boston, Chicago and New York’, p.98.

[136] Joe Derrane, interview with Brian Lawlor, 25 April 2002, Irish Music Center, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.

Street. A week after, there were bars on the doors. That was the end of Roxbury. The night they rioted there, that was the last night we played there.'[137] Some performers whose musical lives centred on the dance halls felt abandoned by this change and, in the most extreme case, Joe Derrane gave up Irish music almost entirely until his 'rediscovery' in the 1990s.[138] In New York the decline has a less dramatic status in collective memory; the halls simply 'started to fade'.[139] Dorothy Hayden Cudahy, Mattie Connolly, and Martin Mulhaire attribute this change to the reduction in levels of Irish immigration in the 1960s: 'of course immigration has dwindled and there's no young people coming out and as a result most of the dance halls have closed down.'[140] The 1960s also witnessed a transformation in musical tastes with the decreasing popularity of ballroom dances and the rise of the Beatles. In Boston, New York, and Chicago the dance halls 'fizzled out', forcing musicians to find alternative outlets for their energies.[141]

In Britain pubs had a central role in the Irish community, particularly for working men and musicians (see Chapter 4). While interviewees mention them in the American context (referred to variously as speakeasies, saloons, taverns, taprooms, bars, and pubs), it is as one of many sites for traditional music. From the 1920s musicians would on occasion meet in speakeasies and after the end of Prohibition it continued in Irish-run bars.[142] These remained predominantly male domains into the 1960s. Melodeon player Tom Doherty arrived in New York City in 1948 and when asked where he first played he said, 'I played in Downey's saloon on Blackbush Avenue, and I played on Western Avenue in McRory's and I've played up here in Hatten and I don't know the name of the saloon' and he suggested that all drew in Donegal immigrants among whom 'a big demand' existed for his music.[143] In the 1960s and into the '70s the pub scene took off and Larry Reynolds says in Boston,

[137] Mickey Connolly, quoted in Gedutis, *See You at the Hall*, p.197.
[138] Scott Alarik, 'To His Surprise, He's an Irish Music Legend', *Boston Globe*, 12 March 2000, p.13.
[139] Jerry Lynch, interview with the author, 20 Nov. 2010.
[140] Martin Mulhaire, interview with Mick Moloney, 5 Dec. 1981, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; Dorothy Hayden Cudahy & John Cudahy, interview with Mick Moloney, 31 Dec. 1982, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; Mattie Connolly, interview with Mick Moloney (undated), Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[141] Larry Reynolds, interview with the author, 29 Oct. 2009.
[142] Dorothy Hayden Cudahy & John Cudahy, interview with Mick Moloney, 31 Dec. 1982, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; Gene Kelly, interview with Mick Moloney, 24 Feb. 1978, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; John Vesey, interview with Mick Moloney, 8 Jan. 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; Tommy Caulfield, interview with Mick Moloney, 10 May 1976, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[143] Tom Doherty, interview with Mick Moloney, 11 Sept. 1985, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

'every pub wanted to have music.' Jerry Lynch confirms that opinion for the situation in New York, where he says, 'nearly all the Irish-owned pubs had music there on Friday, Saturday and Sunday'. In some circumstances, particularly in earlier decades, this would involve a few musicians playing as in a performance, sometimes with dancing. As the folk revival accelerated, ballad groups also began to feature in pubs. Gradually the new format developed in Britain came in, whereby a few musicians led an informal 'session' in the corner of a pub and others could join them. As the first generation aged, sessions developed into a major training ground for younger musicians as well, ensuring the transmission and survival of the tradition.[144]

Revivals & Associations

Irish music clubs had existed in American cities from around the turn of the twentieth century with differing functions and success rates. In an effort to unify and promote traditional music across the country in 1956 Frank Thornton (originally from Kerry and living in Chicago since 1929) called together a group of musicians to form the Irish Musicians' Association of America (IMAA). The attendees came from Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, New York City, Cleveland, Kansas City, Houston, and Detroit. In his opening speech Thornton stated that the new group's primary purpose was 'to promote, teach, and forever keep alive our Irish Traditional Music' and the same language appears in later documents.[145] He intended the association to consolidate efforts already in place across the country and he drew inspiration from Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, founded in Ireland in 1951. The conveners nonetheless decided to remain distinct from, though affiliated with, that group. On the question of whether to adopt the Comhaltas constitution, Ed Reavy of Cavan and Philadelphia stated, 'we may change it, as *the conditions are different here than they are in Ireland*'.[146] However, the relationship between the two organizations ultimately caused considerable rancour.

Kevin Henry describes the founding of the IMAA and its eventual demise and takeover by CCÉ:

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[144] The word 'session' applied to a gathering for music-making purposes is a mid-twentieth century neologism. Moloney, 'Irish Music in America', p.172, p.201; Sally K. Sommers Smith, 'Irish Traditional Music in a Modern World', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, vol.5, no.2 (Summer 2001), p.120.

[145] 'Minutes of the First Convention of the Irish Musicians' Association of America, Chicago, 1956', in McCullough, 'Irish Music in Chicago', p.366; Articles of Incorporation for the Irish Musicians' Association of America, State of Illinois, 13 Jan. 1958, Kevin Henry Manuscripts, ITMA.

[146] Emphasis added. 'Minutes of the First Convention of the Irish Musicians' Association of America, Chicago, 1956', in McCullough, 'Irish Music in Chicago', p.370.

> In 1958 we had people in here from Philadelphia, New York and Cleveland, and Chicago and we had a convention downtown. It was decided on to hold, to get a charter. They couldn't get a charter in New York and they couldn't get a charter in Ohio, so we got a charter here. A man by the name of Jimmy Neary he had influence with the politicians and we got a charter out of Springfield, because [it was a] not for profit organization. We were going strong for twenty-five years, nobody ever bothered us. We used to send a dollar a year to the people back in Ireland, you know, to keep [good relations], they weren't bothering us and we weren't bothering them. So in 1972 a man by the name of Labhras Ó Murchú [of CCÉ] came out here and I was the first one to meet him. He told me his business, what he was coming out here for, so to organize. I said to him after the meeting, I said, 'Labhras', I said, 'would you like to come out and I'll show you where Chief O'Neill is buried?' And he turned around to me and he said 'I haven't time.' And that finished me.[147]

He stresses the importance of transnational connections – sending a dollar back to Ireland to maintain good relations – but questions the motives of Comhaltas in trying to absorb the IMAA. He suggests money proved the driving force, that CCÉ showed more interest in the organization's coffers than its members or message, and that it offered little genuine support to Irish music in America. Kevin resents Comhaltas's view of Ireland as the sole hub of the tradition, represented by Ó Murchú's rejection of the offer to visit O'Neill's grave. While Thornton had organized a tour of Ireland by Irish-American musicians in 1959,[148] under CCÉ tours have only gone the opposite direction while all proceeds return to the Dublin headquarters.[149]

Jimmy Noonan recounts how a similar bitterness about the CCÉ takeover existed in Cleveland in his youth:

> They had this thing, from the '50s, the Irish Musicians' Association, they had branches in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, but the first [CCÉ] tour… they called musicians' meetings every place that they had this tour and they put on this beautiful concert, but what they wanted you to do was become a branch of Comhaltas and take the treasury or whatever you had and sign it over to them. In a lot of places they just kind of did it, but

[147] The Articles of Incorporation for the Irish Musicians' Association of America were signed and filed in the State of Illinois on 13 January 1958. The board of directors was named as Frank Thornton, James Neary, Johnny McGreevy, and James Donnelly. (On the document I consulted Kevin Henry's name appears on the list, but looks as though it was added later, perhaps to his personal copy.) In this quotation I believe he refers to a convention (not the first) held in 1958 when it was decided to officially incorporate. Kevin Henry Manuscripts, ITMA.

[148] This tour included six traditional musicians and fifteen step dancers, all American-born, and covered twenty-three venues across Ireland in twenty-seven days. Frank Thornton, interview with Mick Moloney, 6 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU; Johnny McGreevy, interview with Mick Moloney, 5 April 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

[149] Kevin was involved in the CCÉ concert tours for a few years, but eventually could not stand it any longer: 'you had to send back the money that you got at the concert back to Ireland and they'd send you back what they wanted to. Can you believe that?... They were home free. When you'd done all the work they collected… I went through all this, so I did. I'm not bragging or boasting, you know what I mean, I'm speaking my mind because I love the music and I love the way that it's been produced and that nobody's getting exploited.'

> there was a lot of friction about it. Cleveland was one of the places that said 'no way,' they said, 'we raised this money by putting dances on, our wives baked soda bread for bake sales, we're not signing it over and just giving you our treasury, we won't do it.' So when Comhaltas became big, Cleveland stayed with the Irish Musicians' Association. So I saw that and I remember, I was fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen and then they made me the Vice President of the Musicians' Association and at that time I was kind of into Comhaltas and what they were doing, but then I didn't know better. But they knew and now I see it their way. It's funny, I was in the whole thing [CCÉ], but I never was a member… It's interesting, Philadelphia I think was the other one, they didn't switch over, but Chicago did, New York they all did. But they just didn't see the point when they're doing their own things for the kids, like 'what are you going to do for us?' but that's not the way it works.

As a result, though Jimmy teaches classes for CCÉ in Boston, he asserts that he 'never was a member' and in hindsight regrets how things turned out: 'I think what's sad about Comhaltas too is that they didn't bring us, my generation (in Ireland they did but not over here), they didn't bring us into it. So when you go to the Convention, they're all people that are sixty, seventy years old having a great time, but the people in their twenties and thirties are not around, they're not doing it.' A perceived lack of success in the long run may feed into the understanding of past events.

Louis Quinn had organized IMAA branches in New York and he indicated that managerial problems had begun before Comhaltas came on the scene:

> All kinds of complications came up in it, you know. Guys that had no ability to run an organization at all, when they saw the thing going they wanted to take it over, you know. And of course, they couldn't get elected to office because of the fact that the people that were in the organization saw that they weren't the material for to make anything out of an organization, so we just turned them down. Then they set about if they couldn't get it they were going to wreck it. That's what happens amongst the Irish. That's what happened to it and then it became so aggrevative [sic] to me that I decided it wasn't worth continuing with it and I dropped out. The whole organization is picked up, some of them picked up a few of the branches and then Comhaltas came in and whatever was left we turned them over to Comhaltas.[150]

When questioned on the difference between the two organizations he said, 'there's no difference apart from the fact that the TIMA [sic] doesn't want to be dictated to by Comhaltas, you see, and they wouldn't join them at that time.'[151] Members raised the issue at an annual meeting and reached a consensus against amalgamation, with money constituting a central point of debate:

[150] Louis Quinn, interview with Mick Moloney, 17 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[151] Ibid.

> They figured like if they joined the organization over there they would have to send a certain amount of revenue over there to them every year and they couldn't see what they were going to get in return for this. And they would always vote you out of it. As a matter of fact at that time both Reavy and myself and Frank Thornton decided it'd be a good idea for to contribute something to the organization in Ireland and keep a relationship with them in order that, we had a lot in common and we were working for the same objective, you see. So I went over there and of course Jim Seery was there at the time and Jim Seery turned down, at that time the affiliation fee in Ireland was something like a pound for a branch and the organization here only wanted to give ten shillings. He wouldn't take the ten shillings. He finally did take it after a while, but he wanted the pound. While when I came back here and told them here – that under no circumstances, why should we give them a pound, what are we getting for the pound, you see. But then finally when the thing began to lose a lot of its attractiveness they decided then that Comhaltas should come into the picture. Comhaltas came over here, Jerry Keane and Labhras [Ó Murchú], they talked to me and I was the last president of the organization. Ed Reavy was the president and I was the general chairman over the organization here and I, a lot of the funds were raised here in the New York area and I had tried to hold them as best I could, to keep them together, all the funds that were left in the organization. So then we had a meeting and decided then that as long as they weren't going to continue as the Irish Musicians' Association then we should amalgamate with Comhaltas and drop the Irish Musicians' Association altogether, you know and turn the funds over to Comhaltas for what they could do with them. So that's what happened to the money.[152]

His story largely matches up with those of Kevin Henry and Jimmy Noonan as well as the founding documents of the IMAA: its members had no objection to affiliation with Comhaltas, but controversy stemmed from concerns about finances, control, and benefits.[153]

However, the memory of this transition and its legacy remains contested. Oral testimonies indicate that those in the IMAA who advocated amalgamation created an alternative narrative after the fact. Frank Thornton, in an interview with Mick Moloney, contradicted evidence from the minutes of the first convention, saying that from the time of the Irish Musicians' Association's foundation 'our parent body was Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann'.[154] Elsewhere in the same interview when asked again about the IMAA he said 'it was formed then in 1956 as a branch of Comhaltas'.[155] Likewise, Johnny McGreevy, asked when Comhaltas started in

[152] Louis Quinn, interview with Mick Moloney, 17 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[153] Similar concerns have arisen in Ireland, particularly over the relationship between the organization's central leadership and local branches. Fleming, 'Resisting Cultural Standardization', pp.236-8.
[154] Frank Thornton, interview with Mick Moloney, 6 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[155] Frank Thornton, interview with Mick Moloney, 6 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

America, said in Chicago in 1956 and went on to describe the conventions held in different cities, clearly conflating it with the IMAA.[156] Those on the 'pro-amalgamation' side thus seem to have absolved themselves of responsibility for any lingering resentment by suggesting that the two organizations were the same from the start. Though this evidence comes from Mick Moloney's interviews, his dissertation fails to fully explore the controversy and his perception of CCÉ's successes seems to colour his assessment.[157] The two groups operated separately for a number of years, with some local branches having switched allegiances, while whole cities remained divided. The IMAA eventually died out by the late 1970s and Comhaltas is now the only Irish music organization with a national presence, but feelings about it remain raw, as my interviews with Kevin Henry and Jimmy Noonan demonstrate. To them the Irish Musicians' Association of America represented an act of preserving and promoting traditional music in the United States by and for the musicians in that country while still maintaining transnational links, whereas Comhaltas (like the Irish government generally) views Ireland as the focal point of Irish culture and the diaspora as a source of revenue.[158]

Contemporaneous with these associations and the masses of young Irish migrants attending the dance halls, another type of music scene developed in the same cities. Singer Liam Clancy arrived in New York in January 1956, but distinguished himself from his contemporaries:

> Of course my arrival here was so totally different even from the people who arrived in their droves from Ireland at the time. They would've come over say by plane. They would've gone to one of the Irish ghettos – Yonkers or the Bronx or far Rockaway or whatever. And they would never have moved out of those areas. You wouldn't hear anything but an Irish accent. They had their dance halls. They tried to meet someone, preferably from their hometown, if not from their home county, marry them, and continue that blinkered ghetto mentality. I was brought here by a Guggenheim, brought

[156] Johnny McGreevy, interview with Mick Moloney, 5 Apr. 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[157] Moloney, 'Irish Music in America', pp.482-6.
[158] CCÉ is not the only Irish government-sponsored organization to use Irish America as a source of revenue: the GAA held the 1947 All-Ireland Football Final in New York and at the end the organization's secretary Paddy O'Keeffe boarded the ship back to Ireland carrying 'a very large suitcase in each hand. Dollar bills, packed tightly, filled each suit case – to the brim. Behind Paddy walked other GAA officials. Each man also carried a large suitcase also packed with Dollar Bills.' In Sarah Brady, 'Playing "Irish" Sport on Baseball's Hallowed Ground: The 1947 All-Ireland Gaelic Football Final', in Rogers & O'Brien (eds.), *After the Flood*, p.33.

> up to see her uncle's museum… It was very different, we were a very different type of immigrant from the people who joined the mass exodus.[159]

'Blinkered ghetto mentality' is hardly a complimentary phrase. Liam, avoiding the 'ghetto' and its denizens, instead favoured the bohemian folk clubs of Greenwich Village. He accurately observes that very few other Irish migrants made this crossover and until the mid-1950s the Irish influence on the American folk scene seems to have come primarily from print and record sources rather than people.[160]

Liam and his older brothers Tom and Paddy came New York to pursue acting careers, but found success as singers: The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem began performing together as a group in 1956 and during the course of their career recorded over fifty albums of Irish songs and toured the world in their characteristic white Aran sweaters.[161] As Riverdance would do a generation later, they came to symbolize a face of Irish music recognized worldwide and played a significant role in reviving interest in it. However, that view only applies in retrospect and at the time they consciously distanced themselves from the Irish milieu. Paddy Clancy identified their early musical influences: 'well, there was Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and the Kingston Trio, you see. They seemed to be, that was something of course American to get a guitar and a banjo. The only things we had through the Irish were the songs and ourselves. The way we adapted them, the way we changed the songs, was completely influenced by what we found in America.'[162] Their singing style and adoption of the guitar and five-string banjo as accompaniment represented

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[159] Liam Clancy, interview with Miriam Nyhan, 29 March 2009, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.

[160] Folk musicians in America recognized Irish music as part of the roots of American music thanks in part to the work of early collectors such as Francis J. Child, who compiled over 300 ballads and their English, Scottish, and American variants. While Child based his work on manuscripts, with the advent of recording technology, collectors went to the singers themselves in a search for both roots and authenticity. In the 1950s these collectors included Alan Lomax and Sidney Robertson Cowell. Deirdre Ní Chonghaile, 'In Search of America: Sidney Robertson Cowell in Ireland in 1955-1956', *Journal of American Folklore*, vol.126, no.500 (Spring 2013), pp.174-200; John Szwed, *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World* (Arrow Books, London, 2011), pp.255-7.

[161] They got their name by accident: having failed to provide a name to a club in Chicago where they were booked to perform, they arrived to find 'The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem' on the poster. Having difficulty picking a stage costume, they chose the four white Aran sweaters that their mother had sent from Ireland to keep them warm over the cold New York Christmas. Liam Clancy, *Memoirs of an Irish Troubadour* (Virgin Books, London, 2002), pp.231, 276-7.

[162] Paddy Clancy, interview with Mick Moloney, 6 March 1990, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

the creation of a new musical hybrid.[163] Exposure to the Clancy's Irish repertoire also influenced their American counterparts, including Pete Seeger and Bob Dylan.[164]

When asked about why the group chose not to sing Irish-American songs, Paddy said, 'because we were afraid of it. I mean, that was the very thing we wanted to avoid because that would lock us in to just the Irish dance halls and little Irish gatherings and that's the one thing we did not want.'[165] Their songs came primarily from the repertoire of their families and local communities. Among the Irish, these songs had an audience, though in many ways they had yet to overcome social barriers, including their association with the Irish rural working class. The Clancy's early gigs had few Irish people in attendance, but their fame grew after their appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show in March 1961, wearing their characteristic Aran sweaters for the first time. Paddy Clancy recalls that this television slot 'was like magic as far as the Irish crowd were concerned. They discovered us on the Ed Sullivan Show and they weren't listening to us before that, but 'twas like getting the blessing of the Pope, you know. We couldn't go wrong.'[166] They became the Irish face of the folk revival and through them many people worked backwards to discover traditional music.[167]

Sean-nós singer and Connemara-native Joe Heaney arrived in the United States for the Newport Folk Festival in 1965 (the year Bob Dylan went electric) and stayed, settling in New York City and performing at folk clubs. Like the Clancy Brothers, a television appearance – on the Merv Griffin show for St. Patrick's Day in 1966 – launched his American singing career. He rarely performed for specifically Irish or Irish-American audiences and recalls a bitter experience with the Gaelic League:

> One Irish place asked me to go and give a something, the Gaelic League, and I took Liam Clancy with me. Because I had Liam Clancy with me they didn't like it because he didn't speak Irish. I did a little bit, I took Liam up with me to sing. My idea is to introduce somebody who doesn't know the language and do your best to get them encouraged enough to speak it, you know. So I took Liam with me and a fellow told me after, 'you shouldn't have done that' he said. I said, 'what?' 'You came here,' he said, 'to speak in Irish'. I said 'why are you speaking English to me? I can speak Irish. I've

[163] Moloney, 'Irish Music in America', p.102.
[164] O'Connor, *Bringing it all Back Home*, pp.101-8.
[165] Paddy Clancy, interview with Mick Moloney, 6 March 1990, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Mick Moloney, 'Irish-American Popular Music', in Lee & Casey (eds.), *Making the Irish American*, pp.402-3.

> got more Irish than you'll ever know. Give me my thirty dollars' I said 'and let me go home out of this.' And I wasn't near them since.[168]

When asked why Irish and Irish-American organizations seemed to have little interest in his singing, he speculated that some of them, 'think it's a waste of time or something, I don't sing enough "Mother Machree"'.[169] The established Irish-American population – respectable and upwardly mobile – perhaps felt discomfort in Heaney's personal embodiment of the impoverished, Gaelic Ireland they had left behind.[170] Heaney's words also attest to the fact that Liam Clancy, more than his brothers, showed an interest in Heaney's Ireland and its traditions, which manifested itself later in his career.

While the Clancy Brothers also avoided sentimental Irish-American fare, they found a wide audience by adapting the songs they learned growing up to a folk group style. Joe Heaney chose to continue singing the way he always had and to inform his audiences. He recalled his motivations:

> I was approached by several people and they asked me why don't you put this before larger area audiences because I'm sure if you did people who haven't heard this stuff before and they'd be really delighted to hear there's another side to singing besides 'Mother Machree'. And eventually I said to myself, why not give it a try anyway because I'd love to do it anyway and I admired the people who kept these songs and stories alive, so why not I have the chance to represent them and put before people what they believed in and loved, so I set out to do it.[171]

He stayed true to his traditional art while still using his performances to expand its potential audience and their knowledge of the history and folklore of Ireland. In most places he said of the audiences 'two percent of them are Irish or of Irish descent, but that's about all. I find that a lot of audiences, especially the third or fourth generation, they're very interested in hearing the old things, the old things like I do, I don't change it.'[172] He suggested that by explaining to his listeners his background and the meaning of his songs, he got good responses. Williams and Ó Laoire, in their assessment of Heaney's life and work, argue that some Irish Americans, in their search for their roots, projected their longing 'for a fictive Irish heritage' onto the

[168] Joe Heaney, interview with Mick Moloney, 4 Dec. 1981, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Sean Williams & Lillis Ó Laoire, *Bright Star of the West: Joe Heaney, Irish Song Man* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2011), pp.200-3.
[171] Joe Heaney, interview with Mick Moloney, 2 Jan. 1982, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[172] Ibid.

singer, but it is evident from the passages quoted here that Heaney himself also cultivated this 'authentic' image.[173]

Both the Clancy Brothers and Joe Heaney established careers in America from initial performances on the folk circuit and they challenged pre-existing perceptions of Irish music and song, but they chose to do so in very different ways. They were friendly on personal terms and expressed mutual respect for the other's art and performance style: the Clancys recorded songs they learned from Heaney and he acknowledged their help in finding him a job and performance opportunities. Nonetheless, the Clancy Brothers as a group came to be associated with up-tempo, rhythmic, rowdy sing-alongs, while Heaney's image was that of 'a conduit of a magnificent tradition' carved out of the rocky Connemara landscape.[174] If the Clancys symbolized a new, cosmopolitan, and confident Irishness, then Heaney 'was a throwback' to an older Gaelic Ireland.[175] Both performance styles and images fed back into the traditional music revival that was already underway.

Despite their flaws, the IMAA, Comhaltas, and the folk revival, along with contemporaneous innovations in Ireland, all contributed to a new interest in Irish traditional music in the 1960s and '70s. This created an audience for groups like The Bothy Band, who played superb music, but challenged Irish-American expectations and ideas of respectability. Kevin Henry organized their first concert in Chicago (c.1976) and recalls:

> I picked them up at the airport now, just to tell you, when I had seen the scene of the folk festivals, you know I had been at Wolf Trap and a few more places and to the Irish audiences here, they hadn't seen anything [like that], all they seen was dickie bows if you know what I mean. When I brought them [The Bothy Band] out here I had a concert for them on the north side and I had one on the south side and I went in to them when they were getting ready, Donal Lunny, Matt Molloy, Kevin Burke, Tina O'Donnell [Tríona Ní Dhomhnaill] and her brother [Mícheál Ó Domhnaill]… I went into them and I was getting friction from a lot, 'why aren't they dressed?' I said, 'fellows, now,' I said, 'the only thing I want you to do before you go on stage,' I said, 'I'm getting a lot of heat now with the ways you're dressed. Will ye comb your hair?' And they said, 'ok so.' That went alright then the first night. The second night was over here in Bowman High School… The wife was sitting beside somebody here and I was sitting beside another guy, his name was 'the Plough', he was good with sayings, and Lunny was up there and his hair was down here, just coincidence he scratched his head and our Ploughboy said to me, he said, 'there's habitation there!' She was on the other [side]. 'Why aren't they dressed?' 'Listen to the

[173] Williams & Ó Laoire, *Bright Star of the West*, p.178.
[174] Tom Munnelly, 'A Mastersinger from Carna', *Musical Traditions* (15 Nov. 2011).
[175] Williams & Ó Laoire, *Bright Star of the West*, p.199.

> music! Never mind their dress!' And they were great, there was nothing like them, the best that ever came.

While the Clancy Brothers had agonized over choosing a stage costume nearly twenty years earlier and dance bands had opted for tuxedos, by the mid-1970s standards had changed, at least in folk music circles. The Bothy Band's dress indicated a new generation rejecting conventional mores and adopting a more 'hip' style. Clearly some Irish and Irish-American attitudes shifted more slowly! While Kennedy's election in 1960 may have symbolized full acceptance of the Irish into American society, a long history of prejudice and stereotypes meant that they remained conscious of the image they presented to the world.

V. Conclusions

Irish migrants after the Second World War entered an America where the idea of Irishness was, paradoxically, both established and in flux: established because though anti-Irish prejudice had faded away, migrants still had to negotiate stereotypes of the stage Irishman and the drunkard and the Irish-American population remained self-conscious in its newfound respectability; and in flux, because the era witnessed the birth of a new, positive view of America as a 'nation of immigrants' in which all could contribute to a multicultural society.[176] Rogers and O'Brien write that 'the fifteen years after World War Two might also be the most important single period for twentieth-century Irish-American ethnicity – a time that witnessed the death of certain traditional elements, the adaptation of others, and the forging of images that would define the Irish American for the rest of the century.'[177] While scholars have largely neglected the influence of new migrants, this chapter has shown that (extending the post-war era up to 1970), they played a significant role in negotiating and shaping definitions of Irish-American identity.

As migrants, the post-war generation benefitted from the groundwork their predecessors laid and the shift in general attitudes towards the Irish, but nonetheless they had to undergo much the same process of adjustment. As musicians, the subjects of this study found a cultural scene dominated by ideas of respectability and vaudevillian performance. They helped bring about the gradual but final end of traditional music's association with poverty and backwardness. Hybridized forms of

[176] Matthew O'Brien, '"Hibernians on the March": Irish-American Ethnicity and the Cold War', in Rogers & O'Brien (eds.), *After the Flood*, p.57; Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*.
[177] Rogers & O'Brien, *After the Flood*, p.5

Irish music played in dance halls and pubs and by groups like the Clancy Brothers led to the eventual emergence of a more modern idiom. Though its fortunes fluctuated in different cities between 1945 and 1970, a critical mass of first- and second-generation Irish always played and listened to it, making an important contribution to ethnic 'cultural persistence'.[178] Their efforts, combined with wider societal trends including the folk revival and acceptance of multiculturalism, meant that it would survive and thrive in America for years to come.

Ultimately, Martin Mulhaire credits the post-war migrant generation with the persistence of traditional music:

> This generation that came here that I'm talking about, when they moved on and got married and had their families this is the generation that has preserved traditional music in America, because every one of them as their kids were growing up they were sent for lessons and they learned to play the violin, accordion, flutes, everything and they have kept the tradition, no doubt. There's some great players as attested by the fact that they go back from here and they have won in the fleadh cheoils and everything. These are the children of the people I am talking about… My thinking is that this generation were a little more affluent maybe than their parents before them that came here to very rough times during the Wall Street Crash and Irish had a hard time getting jobs and everything. In this period like of the '50s or '60s we had John Kennedy as President of the United States and there was a great sense of pride being Irish. This generation of Irish did very well; they made great strides. They were more affluent and they could afford to send their kids for lessons, you know. So that was a big help… Maybe the fact that emigration now has ceased, they felt that they were the generation that's got to keep the culture alive. They said if it dies with us it's gone because there are no people coming from Ireland anymore, so this is it. As a result they clung more to their Irish heritage.[179]

He links the changing fortunes of Irish culture and identity to their historical context. While for some affluence meant leaving urban 'ghettos' for suburbs or expecting stage performers to wear dickie bows, it could also give the Irish pride in their achievements. Migrants no longer had to turn their noses up at traditional music and dancing to enact the image of American affluence. As the twentieth century progressed, their newfound confidence and eventual realization of permanent settlement in the United States combined with social and cultural forces to make music a positive link to their origins. This attitude fed back into the folk revival underway in Ireland, where people saw their bretheren overseas contributing to and valuing the traditions they themselves had once shunned.

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[178] Nicholsen, '"Auld Sod" and New Turf', p.30; Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Dance Halls of Romance and Culchies in Tuxedos', p.21.
[179] Martin Mulhaire, interview with Mick Moloney, 5 Dec. 1981, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

Chapter 4

'Another Ireland'? The Irish in Britain

Writer and navvy Dónall Mac Amhlaigh recorded two lines from a parody of the Famine song 'Skibbereen' in one of his many articles for the *Irish Times*:

> Oh father dear I'm over here and I won't be coming back
> The ladies dear, the pint of beer, the Woodbine and the crack.[1]

He says Irish labourers in Britain sang it 'in a tone of rueful mockery'.[2] Perhaps they used the laughter it provoked to make light of their circumstances, while regretting the truth of the words. While the lines foreground male experiences, they also point to ambivalence and tensions at the heart of Irish life in post-war Britain: migrants enjoyed having money to spend, but they may have genuinely missed their families and wanted to return. Emphasizing the positive aspects of their new lives and defiantly singing 'I won't be coming back' concealed complex feelings. Though many of this generation shared similar backgrounds in Ireland and occupations and social lives in Britain,[3] 'there was no universal historical experience of being Irish in post-war Britain'.[4] Nonetheless, themes emerge from oral histories and memoirs that illuminate our understanding of the mail-boat generation without compromising its diversity.

This chapter begins with a consideration of migration patterns to and within Britain, showing how the individuals in this study fit into broader frameworks. The stories of journeys both confirm the reasons for demographic trends and highlight the sense of rupture involved in moving from one country to another, even one in close geographical proximity. Upon arrival many recall an initial feeling of culture shock;

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[1] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Labradors and Muck-Students', *The Irish Times*, 10 Jan. 1970.
[2] Ibid.
[3] In London and Birmingham in 1966, 89 percent of Irish migrants were working-class. John Corbally, 'Shades of Difference: Irish, Caribbean, and South Asian Immigration to the Heart of Empire, 1948-1971' (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Davis, 2009), p.7. Most traditional musicians came from the rural landless and small-farming classes in Ireland (see Chapter 2) and were considered working class in Britain.
[4] Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007), p.5. Steven Fielding makes a similar argument for an earlier time period, writing that it is problematic to suggest immigrant 'identity' and 'experience' existed in the singular, because that would imply cultural uniformity where it did not exist. *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1993), p.14.

sometimes in a negative sense with homesickness or loneliness and other times in positive ways through realization of the possibilities urban life offered or humorous anecdotes about misunderstandings. New migrants prioritized finding jobs and accommodation, endeavours that could lead to experiences of anti-Irish discrimination or to the joy of a wage packet and newfound comrades. Outside of work, social life played an important role in creating senses of community and identity among the Irish, albeit ones that contained subdivisions based on place of origin, class, education, and occupation. The latter part of this chapter assesses the ways in which music and dancing gave migrants a focal point for their recreation and reflected both cohesion and diversity within the Irish community. For the post-war period scholarship exists on the politics of migration and Delaney's works offer excellent overviews of Irish experiences, but the aspects of social and cultural life addressed here have received far less attention.

Reflecting on four decades spent living in London Martin and Teresa McMahon said:

> TERESA: There was great times in London. Then again when I say that, we formed our own community there. We had another Ireland. We had an Ireland over there. Say you were there, we'd meet you tonight and we had other friends and they all got to know each other.
>
> MARTIN: We actually had a fantastic Ireland.
>
> TERESA: We had a fantastic Ireland. We had probably a better Ireland than the one here.
>
> MARTIN: Oh of course. Why wouldn't it. It was so convenient.
>
> TERESA: Everybody knew what was happening to everybody else.
>
> MARTIN: You sort of have to check yourself. You're there, you're not there that long 'til you start to moan and groan, look at the traffic, look at this –
>
> TERESA: You become sort of acclimatized.
>
> MARTIN: – too much time to go here and time to go here and all this business, but yet, to be fair, for all the traffic you could go anywhere you wanted in a half an hour. Then you had the underground, you had buses, you had taxis, you had everything. When we left Ireland we had nothing.
>
> TERESA: No, but the music, this is a fact, seven nights a week for years, for donkey's years, the Irish were involved in music.

This chapter argues that the Irish in Britain in a sense created 'another Ireland', but not one identical to that they had left. The new world they inhabited had less definitive boundaries in geographical or ideological terms; it overlapped with the cultures of other migrant groups and the host society. Thus the Irish 'acclimatized' to their environment while also using formal and informal ethnic institutions to recreate

the familiar, to alleviate the hardship of dislocation, and to sustain the best of the culture and values inculcated in them in their youth. Not all participated in this 'other Ireland', but whether and how they did so reflected their experiences of migration, variegated and intertwining class and ethnic identities, and attitudes to their new circumstances.

I. Across the Water: Journeys and Destinations

The interwar period witnessed a shift in Irish migration patterns away from the United States and towards Great Britain (see figure 3.1 in previous chapter). A number of factors influenced this trend: increasingly restrictive immigration legislation made it more difficult for the Irish to enter the US legally, while at the same time they could freely travel across the Irish Sea;[5] the British economy suffered less during the Great Depression; the Second World War restricted trans-Atlantic passenger flows, while creating a demand for workers in war-related industries in Britain, marking a 'watershed' in migration patterns;[6] after the war Britain required additional labour for rebuilding and the burgeoning welfare state; and low travel costs and the ease of return journeys made it an attractive destination. Within Britain, fewer migrants made their way to Scotland or northern England as the century progressed and more journeyed to the industrial cities of the south, particularly London and Birmingham.[7] The share of Britain's Irish-born population resident in

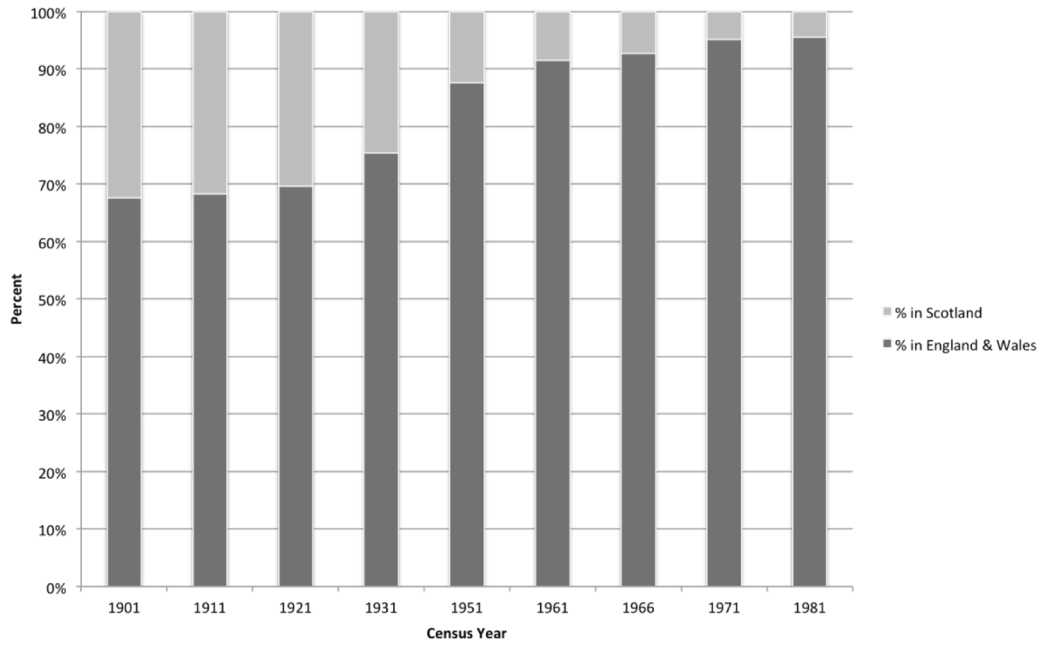
[5] Other than a requirement for travel permits during the Second World War, the Irish always had freedom of movement to Britain. The 1948 British Nationality Act created three categories: British subjects, aliens, and Irish citizens, with the provision that the latter have all the privileges of British subjects without that title. The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act also excluded the Irish from any entry restrictions. Debates have centred over whether this resulted from practical reasoning (having to police the border between the Republic and Northern Ireland or all boats crossing the Irish Sea) or racism, a preference for white Irish immigrants over coloured New Commonwealth immigrants. See: James Hampshire, *Citizenship and Belonging: Immigration and the Politics of Demographic Governance in Postwar Britain* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2005); Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000); Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Immigration, 'Race' and 'Race' Relations in Post-war Britain* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1992).

[6] Tracey Connolly, 'Irish Workers in Britain during World War Two', in Brian Girvin & Geoffrey Roberts (eds.), *Ireland and the Second World War: Politics, Society and Remembrance* (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2000), p.121; Tracey Connolly, 'Emigration from Ireland to Britain during the Second World War', in Bielenberg (ed.), *The Irish Diaspora*, pp.51-64; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp.112-59.

[7] Population movements within Britain showed similar trends established the interwar period and largely dictated by market forces and declining heavy industries. In 1932 37.4 percent of North-East England's labour force was unemployed, compared to the national average of 22.7 percent and in the preceding decade it had witnessed an outward migration of 200,000 or close to 8 percent of its population. Martin Pugh, *'We Danced All Night': A Social History of Britain between the Wars* (The Bodley Head, London, 2008), p.416; Sean Glynn & Alan Booth, *Modern Britain: An Economic and Social History* (Routledge, London & New York, 1996), p.174.

Scotland dropped from over thirty percent in 1901 to less than five percent by 1981 (figure 4.1). This reflected a decline in Scottish industries (particularly shipbuilding and textiles) as well as agricultural mechanisation, both of which lessened the need for migrant labour.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of the Irish-born population in Britain resident in Scotland vs. England & Wales, 1901-1981



Source: Census Reports; Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain since World War II', p.47. These figures include those born in Northern Ireland.

However, traditional patterns of migration did persist, albeit on a reduced scale and in different occupations. Individuals from the northern counties of Ireland remained more likely to journey to Scotland or northern England initially.[8] Vincent Campbell recalls that the people of the south Donegal glens had historically worked as tattie hokers (potato pickers) in Scotland and gangs still took up that work in his youth.[9] Others, including his own parents, had migrated to Pennsylvania, but Vincent himself went to Scotland to work in the shipyards and then on the construction of a hydroelectric dam. Danny Meehan's grandfather had gone to Pennsylvania in the late

[8] In the nineteenth century three general geographical trends dominated migration from Ireland to Britain: Ulster and North Connaught to Scotland; Connaught and Leinster to the north of England and Midlands; and South Leinster and Munster to London, sometimes via South Wales or Bristol. Graham Davis, 'Little Irelands', in Roger Swift & Sheridan Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939* (Barnes & Noble Books, Savage, MD, 1989), p.105.

[9] Seasonal agricultural labour from Ireland to Britain persisted into the 1980s, but little has been written about it in the later years. Anne O'Dowd, *Spalpeens and Tattie Hokers: History and Folklore of the Irish Migratory Agricultural Worker in Ireland and Britain* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1991); Sara Goek, '*Na Spailpíní*: Irish Seasonal Labourers in Britain in the 20th Century', *The Dustbin of History* (18 March 2013) <http://thedustbinofhistory.wordpress.com/2013/03/18/na-spailpini/>.

nineteenth century and his father worked as a seasonal labourer in England, but Danny initially went from Donegal to Yorkshire where he laid electric cables. Though the prevalent occupations changed, the geographical patterns persisted to a degree. Vincent says, 'it was the done thing nearly in our time that time. You left school, you went to Scotland. There was plenty of work in Scotland… Most of the emigration to Scotland then [was to] these hydroelectric schemes.' He adds later that in Scotland he knew a lot of people from Donegal, Cavan, Antrim, Tyrone, and Sligo, saying 'nearly all the crowd from the north part of Ireland they went to Scotland. That's the way it was.' While both Danny and Vincent later moved south, travelling across Britain and engaging in a variety of jobs, their initial journeys followed paths worn by their predecessors.

Chain migration and kinship networks played a role in the continuation of these patterns, with migrants joining family members, as they did in the United States. Jackson, in his survey of 111 migrants from Skibbereen, found that 42.3 percent lived with relatives or friends upon arrival in Britain.[10] When asked why he went to Scotland Joe Heaney said, 'I had an uncle there. I thought I'd better go somewhere to somebody I knew first before I'd venture out into the open on me own, at least have something in my pocket before I'd go somewhere else.'[11] Knowing someone upon arrival meant having a place to sleep for the first few nights and, in many cases, a better chance of getting a job.[12]

Ferry routes from the nearest port of departure also played a role in determining the choice of initial destination (see image 4.1 below). Recollections of the rough journey across the Irish Sea signified the trauma many young migrants went through leaving home for the first time. Vincent Campbell recalls the boat that took both people and cattle from Derry to Glasgow: 'The Derry one was the roughest; they had to go through a place called the Moyles… A terrible rough part of the sea between, going through the narrow part between Ireland and Scotland… You'd hear the old bucks saying when they'd be talking away, "hold on, hold on now to something, we're coming to the Moyles." When you were coming to the

[10] Jackson, *Report on the Skibbereen Social Survey*, p.41.
[11] Heaney also mentioned that in Scotland 'at the time to get a sort of a stable job, a job that you could live off, you had to be a certain religion' and he preferred England because 'nobody would ask you what religion you were, that's one thing they never did'. Joe Heaney, interview with Mick Moloney, 4 Dec. 1981, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[12] Jackson found that 27.9 percent of migrants found their first jobs with the help of friends or relatives. *Report on the Skibbereen Social Survey*, p.41.

Moyles you had to hang on alright.' The Straits of Moyle are the narrowest part of the sea between Northern Ireland and Scotland. Vincent managed to avoid this on his first journey: 'I missed the boat in Derry now that I think of it. I missed the boat surely. I went away on a sheep lorry and he took me as far as Derry but then I discovered the boat was after leaving, so I had to take the train to Belfast. That left my journey a little bit longer. I didn't mind. I didn't have to go through the Moyles!'



Image 4.1: Irish Cross Channel Passenger Services Timetable, Summer 1955. Source: PRO RAIL 910/1, NA UK

The Dún Laoghaire to Holyhead journey features most prominently in memoirs and literature of emigration in the 1950s. It gave migrants of the period their nickname, 'the mail-boat generation'.[13] Kevin McDermott recalls:

> They were the days when you'd get on the boat and the boat was packed. People'd sit on their suitcases all the way over because you couldn't even get a seat inside. The *Princess Maud* comes to mind, that was one from Holyhead, Dún Laoghaire to Holyhead, it was on that run for years and years and years. And that boat didn't have stabilizers. You can imagine the carry on and it would be full of, in those days, the early fifties into the mid-fifties, at peak times (Christmas, summer), you'd have to have a sailing ticket before they'd let you on. You had to apply for a sailing ticket to get on before you paid your fare. If you didn't get a sailing ticket you wouldn't get on. All those used to flood into London. There was trains, the Irish Mail they used to call it, into London, all the way to London.

The boat took on symbolic significance as a place between Ireland and Britain and 'a site invested with numerous hopes and dreams for the future, as well as a place to confront the reality of migrant life.'[14] Though many, Kevin and Vincent included, made the journey more than once, returning on visits to Ireland over the years, each time the Irish Sea and the crowded, rocking boat represented the destabilization of migration.

When settling in Britain the Irish exhibited a preference for urban areas, as they had since the nineteenth century.[15] Cities offered a greater range of options for jobs and housing, higher wages, and concentrated populations that meant opportunities to mingle with fellow countrymen and women. However, the rural to urban move added a layer of complexity to their adjustment:

> TERESA MCMAHON: My brothers, they went to school in England, and my brothers, when they saw the Underground, they couldn't believe this. We came out of the middle of nowhere, and most Irish with us, out of the fields, and you end up in a big city… It was an awful culture shock. You went out of the middle of the country into this.
>
> PACKIE BROWNE: I'd never before been on a train when I left here [in 1964] to go to England and the following day I was on the Underground for to go from where we lived in Kilburn out to the east end of London, out to Aldgate. But we made it and we found the place and we got the job. 'Twas a neighbour of ours used to make the tea there and he used to cook the breakfast as well and he had a big breakfast for us. 'Twas our first introduction to England. We started working there the following Monday.

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[13] Tony Murray, *London Irish Fictions: Narrative, Diaspora and Identity* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2012), p.39.
[14] James Moran, *Irish Birmingham: A History* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2010), p.9.
[15] Davis, 'Little Irelands', pp.104-33; Donald M. MacRaild, 'Crossing Migrant Frontiers: Comparative Reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain and the United States during the Nineteenth Century', in D.M. MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin & Portland, OR, 2000), pp.46-7.

The London Underground symbolizes both the encounters with modern technology and the vast scale of the unfamiliar urban environment. Meeting people from home, as Packie did, lessened the sense of culture shock and alienation that could result from the move. Others recall amazement at the amount of Irish music in London, the diversity of people from across Ireland and the world, seeing a television for the first time, disgruntlement that in a big city nobody greeted you on the street, and humorous accounts of language differences and misunderstandings. Gradually they settled in, or 'acclimatized', but to understand the abiding sense of dislocation that resulted from the journey is to understand why participation in an Irish community helped migrants adjust to their new lives without losing a sense of where they had come from and what it meant to them.

Martin and Teresa McMahon, as quoted in the introduction to this chapter, define a community as a tight social network where 'everybody knew what was happening to everybody else' and 'got to know each other,' facilitated by the 'convenience' of transport.[16] Combining these factors means a community did not necessarily correspond to geographical proximity, such as a neighbourhood, nor automatic membership. Its most important feature is reciprocity: using common feeling and mutual support to cope with low incomes and dislocation. David Fitzpatrick argues that '"community" is best analysed as a product of networks rather than neighbourhood'.[17] Musicians formed one such network. Nonetheless, all the elements in the McMahons' definition converged most prominently in urban areas with high concentrations of Irish migrants. In the post-war era, the cities with the largest proportion of Irish were London, Manchester, and Birmingham in England and Glasgow in Scotland (see Appendix 3, table 6). While they offered a vibrant social life even within the confines of the ethnic group, migrants who settled

[16] 'Community' is an amorphous term, often left undefined. I use it here in the sense the McMahons allude to, with the implication of shared perspectives, networks, and reciprocal dependency. In this sense communities can transcend local and even national boundaries. Joanna Bourke writes that 'the strongest argument in favour of the "community" concept refers not to any notion of innate desirability of socializing with those in cloze proximity but to the "culture of poverty": that is, "community" consciousness was a strategy for coping with low and unpredictable incomes. Reciprocity was crucial. By adhering to a "community", individuals could claim a right to receive help, in exchange for their duty to give help'. The difficulties of defining a 'working-class community' can also apply to ethnic communities. *Working-Class Cultures in Britain, 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (Routledge, London & New York, 1994), pp.148-9, 136-69.

[17] David Fitzpatrick, 'The Irish in Britain: Settlers or Transients?', in P. Buckland & J. Belchem (eds.), *The Irish in British Labour History: Conference Proceedings in Irish Studies, No.1*, Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool with the Society for the Study of Labour History (Liverpool, March 1992), p.7.

elsewhere often felt isolated. Johnny Connolly lived in Preston, Lancashire and though he knew other Irish people, particularly from Connemara and Mayo, when asked about Irish dance halls and pubs he says, 'there was very very few of them' and 'it wasn't a great place for Irish traditional music at all. London I think would've been a great spot… but Preston wasn't like that. The only bit of music that we heard in Preston was what we played ourselves.' This differentiation logically leads historical scholarship to focus on the areas with largest migrant populations. However, it is important to integrate migrants' self-perceptions with statistics in our understanding of community, though many studies assume that using residential clustering is enough. The Irish lived in all parts of Britain, small towns and large, rural and urban, and men in particular also exhibited a high degree of mobility, which census statistics cannot show.

This chapter addresses the issue of settlement versus transience and regional differences, but the focus of my oral histories dictates that the city considered in most detail is London. It had demographic dominance, with 35 percent of all Irish-born in Britain residing in the greater London area in 1961 (Appendix 3, table 6). The Irish-born population in the greater London area rose from just over 100,000 in 1931 (1.3 percent of the total population) to a numerical peak of 295,000 in 1961 (3.6 percent) and relative peak of 3.8 percent, or 283,000, in 1971.[18] The city's cosmopolitan attractions and the development of the ethnic social scene accelerated during the period covered in this study. Even those interviewees who settled elsewhere mention it frequently in regards to Irish community life and music. The city served as a focal point for migrants as well as travelling musicians. Martin McMahon stresses this point saying, 'there wasn't an Irish musician I suppose that ever played a tune, they all at some stage passed through London. And of course from time to time you'd meet everybody in the music side of it. You'd certainly meet more than you would here in Ireland at that stage, because again of the travel and everything, as I said, was so convenient in London.'

Within the city, the Irish lived in every borough, but tended to congregate in certain areas, particularly in northwest London (see figure 4.2 below).[19] Irish migrants had settled in Camden Town since the nineteenth century, a pattern that

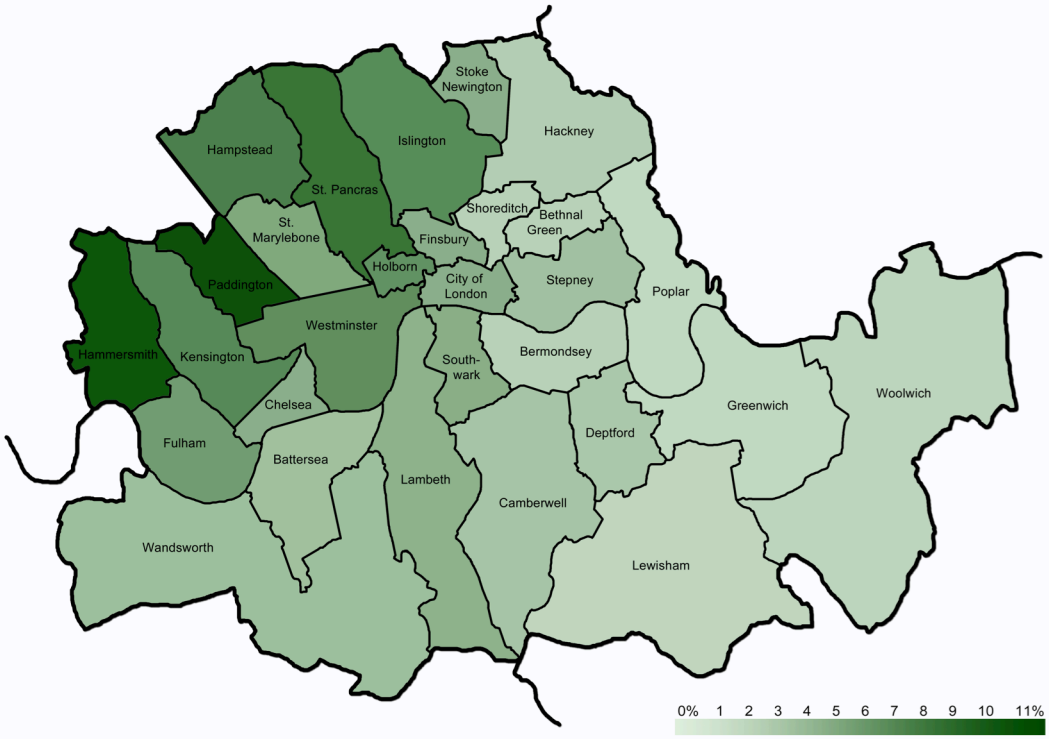
[18] Data compiled from *Census of England and Wales*, 1931, 1951, 1961, 1971. These numbers include those born in the Republic of Ireland, Ireland (part not stated), and Northern Ireland.
[19] Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration & British Society, 1871-1971* (Macmillan Education, Basingstoke, Hampshire & London, 1988), p.216.

continued no doubt due to both chain migration and affordable housing. Popular legend suggests an alternate reason: that it is as far as an Irishman carrying a suitcase can walk from Euston Station (where trains from Holyhead arrived).[20] It took on 'a mythical status' for the Irish in Britain, featuring in works of fiction, theatre, film, and memoir.[21] Roger Sherlock recalls, 'it was renowned for the Irish, Camden Town. They used to say, "Give us the north of Ireland and we'll give you Camden Town." That'll tell you how the Irish were there in thousands.' Songs also name the neighbourhood, as in the last verse of 'McAlpine's Fusiliers':

> Now, here's good luck as we dig that much for we're all long distance men
> Who've travelled down from Camden Town through Chorley and Bridge End.[22]

In Irish enclaves and outside them migrants had to negotiate relations with employers, co-workers, landladies, and their fellow countrymen and women. The

Figure 4.2: Irish-born as a percentage of the total population in London metropolitan boroughs, 1961



Irish-born includes those who gave their birthplace as Republic of Ireland or Ireland (part not stated); it does not include Northern Ireland. Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1961*, Greater London.

[20] O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain*, p.21.
[21] Murray, *London Irish Fictions*, pp.76-80.
[22] Composed by Martin John Henry. In Batty Sherlock & Thomas B. Ryan *Ceol agus Cantan as Dumha 'Chaisil* (Dreoilín Community Arts, Achadh Mór, Co. Mayo, 2007), p.63. See Appendix 4 for the lyrics and further information.

remainder of this chapter analyzes how those experiences shaped individual and collective memories and identities.

II. Work and Living Conditions

Britain after the Second World War faced a drastic labour shortage.[23] Continental European, Irish, and Commonwealth migrants filled that demand and increased competition in the housing market. Though the Irish constituted the largest migrant group until 1971, historical scholarship on this era has focused primarily upon New Commonwealth migrants because of their skin colour and the racism they faced. These groups lived and worked side-by-side, though (with the exception of Colin Holmes's work) only in recent years has scholarship begun to reflect that fact.[24] Anti-Irish discrimination has been labelled 'racism', but this seems to result from linguistic confusion or conceptual misunderstanding of distinctions between race and ethnicity.[25] As I argue in the section on housing below, there is no doubt that the Irish faced some discrimination in the post-war era, based primarily on colonial prejudices, class, and historical antagonisms. Ireland's neutrality during the Second World War and later the onset of the Troubles exacerbated these pre-existing attitudes. Landladies and employers exploited ethnic stereotypes in the unequal power relations of home and workplace. However, skin colour meant that, if they chose, Irish migrants could assimilate and become 'invisible' within British society, which makes the language of race inappropriate.

The workplace and housing developed into the two major arenas of confrontation over migrants' presence. Post-war Britain faced an 'irreconcilable predicament' because 'though many people did not want immigrants in their neighbourhoods or near their homes, [the] post-imperial economy, as it had in the

[23] Unemployment in Britain remained below three percent from 1948 until 1971: 'For the greater part of the 1950s and early '60s, a labour shortage remained the norm, particularly in unskilled jobs. In 1955 for instance, there were 433,000 unfilled vacancies in the country. Even with the influx of migrants, from the end of the war through 1956, more unfilled vacancies than unemployed workers existed. Once statistics became useful in the late 1960s, they would reveal England actually got just what it needed, as researchers showed that immigrants played an extremely important role in the economy.' Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', p.159.

[24] Burrell & Panayi, *Histories and Memories*; Corbally, 'Shades of Difference'; Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, pp.209-72; Walter, *Outsiders Inside*, p.160.

[25] Mary J. Hickman, 'Reconstructing Deconstructing "Race": British Political Discourses about the Irish in Britain', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.21, no.2 (March 1998), pp.288-307; Máirtín Mac an Ghaill, 'The Irish in Britain: The Invisibility of Ethnicity and Anti-Irish Racism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.26, no.1 (Jan. 2000), pp.137-47. For a deconstruction of 'whiteness' studies, see: Barbara Fields, 'Whiteness, Racism, and Identity', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no.60 (Fall 2001), pp.48-56.

past, needed them in its factories, fields and offices.'[26] Migrants found themselves recruited but discriminated against, wanted for their rental income but reviled for living in cramped, dirty flats. As Anna May Mangan writes in her memoir, 'they called the Irish good workers as well as immigrant scum.'[27] Legal entry and official acceptance did not automatically translate into equality in everyday interactions. These experiences shaped their social lives – ethnic pubs and dance halls provided an escape from poor housing – and their relationships with the host society, which took place on the foundation of preconceptions and prejudices built up over generations.[28] This section analyzes the intertwining roles of labour, gender, class, and ethnicity in Irish migrants' work and home lives.

Male Working Cultures

In 1971 74 percent of Irishmen in Britain worked in the skilled manual, partly skilled manual, and unskilled manual occupational categories.[29] They are predominantly associated with the construction industry, where they made up the ranks of scaffolders, carpenters, bricklayers, machine operators, and general labourers in large contracting firms such as McAlpine, Murphy, Laing, and Wimpey and smaller subcontractors. 38 percent of Irishmen in Britain worked 'on the buildings' in 1966 and many of those interviewed for this study counted among that group at some point in their lives (see Appendix 3, table 7 for detailed data on occupations).[30] It drew them with its high wages plus overtime, low skill requirements, and aura of independence 'relying on one's health and strength, tied to no employer, no contract, no trade union, free from tax officials and insurance

[26] Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', p.146; John Corbally, 'The Jarring Irish: Postwar Immigration to the Heart of Empire', *Radical History Review*, no.104 (Spring 2009), p.112. Both Irish and Commonwealth immigrants faced discrimination and similar poor conditions in housing.
[27] Anna May Mangan, *Me and Mine: A Warm-Hearted Memoir of a London Irish Family* (Virago, London, 2011), p.38.
[28] Though there may have been somewhat more tolerance for the Irish in the post-war period compared to earlier eras, 'the long-standing reproduction of anti-Irish sentiment was difficult to dislodge'. Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, p.252; Kenneth Lunn, '"Good for a Few Hundreds at Least": Irish Labour Recruitment into Britain during the Second World War', in Buckland & Belchem (eds.), *The Irish in British Labour History*, pp.103-4.
[29] John A. Jackson, 'The Irish in Britain', in P.J. Drudy (ed.), *Ireland and Britain since 1922*, Irish Studies 5 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986), p.130.
[30] Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain since World War II', pp.56-7. Reg Hall notes that in post-war London, 'almost exclusively, the immigrant musicians and singers were manual workers', predominantly male and from rural backgrounds. There were female musicians, but in much smaller numbers. Reg Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London, 1890-1970: A Socio-Cultural History' (Ph.D. diss., University of Sussex, 1994), p.308.

agents, each man for himself in a tough world'.[31] The masculine environment of the building site takes centre stage in narratives of the period, such as the oft-quoted *Dialann Deoraí* (translated as *An Irish Navvy*) by Dónall Mac Amhlaigh.[32] For Mac Amhlaigh and other writers including Brian Behan, John B. Keane, and Richard Power, 'building and the landscape of reconstruction were not the background but the very fabric of [their] narrative[s]. Building sites were at once the migrants' workplace and one location of their community.'[33] They appear in the texts as predominantly Irish spaces. Though construction work employed neither the majority of Irishmen nor an Irish-majority workforce in statistical terms, the perception that they did holds most salience in the creation of collective memory.

Part of the reason for the ethnic focus is that Irishmen exhibited less concrete attachment to occupations or trade unions than their British counterparts, often readily switching jobs. Though categorically they belonged to the working class they showed little affinity for that identity beyond ethnic boundaries. Mac Amhlaigh commented of the English working class, 'I didn't seem to have a lot in common with them. I couldn't relax with them or enjoy their company very much… It seemed to me that we were on a different wavelength completely. I stayed among Irish friends almost exclusively… You could live a completely expatriate life among your own people.'[34] Irishmen developed a working culture based on a sense of common backgrounds and experiences.[35] In telling their life stories they draw on those positive personal and collective values to make sense of their circumstances.

Many Irishmen worked 'on the buildings' because they lacked formal qualifications in a trade or other line of work. In 1961 82 percent of migrants had left

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[31] Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain since World War II', pp.56-7.
[32] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Dialann Deoraí* (An Clóchomhar, Dublin, 1960); Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navvy: The Diary of an Exile*, trans. Valentin Iremonger (Collins Press, Cork, 2004).
[33] Claire Wills, 'Realism and the Irish Immigrant: Documentary, Fiction, and Postwar Irish Labor', *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol.73, no.3 (Sept. 2012), p.376. Scholars frequently rely on Mac Amhlaigh's *An Irish Navvy* as a general stand-in for Irishmen's experiences (and mostly in translation, rather than the original). This is especially problematic because Mac Amhlaigh himself expressed unhappiness with the book and left a larger body of work that is often ignored. Nic Eoin, '*An Scríobhneoir agus an Imirce Éigeantach*', pp.92-104; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties', *Irish Studies in Britain*, no.14 (Spring/Summer 1989), pp.5-13; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh in Nigel Gray (ed.), *Writers Talking* (Caliban Books, London, 1989), pp.171-91.
[34] Mac Amhlaigh in Gray (ed.), *Writers Talking*, p.175. On relationships between class and ethnicity see: Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity*, pp.14-18; O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity in Post-War Birmingham', pp.165-6; Linda McDowell, *Working Lives: Gender, Migration and Employment in Britain, 1945-2007* (Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, West Sussex, 2013), p.33.
[35] Goek, '"I Never Would Return Again to Plough the Rocks of Bawn"'.




Image 4.2, left: Irish building worker (undated; unidentified photographer). Image 4.3, right: Construction site (undated; unidentified photographer). Source: Photographic Collection, AIB LMU.

school before age fifteen.[36] Johnny Connolly left school at fourteen and worked at home farming and fishing for three years before he migrated to Preston and got a job through family members. He says, 'I wasn't qualified for anything else. But I was happy enough with it.' Martin Niland had worked in the construction industry before leaving Dublin and he took up a job in England driving machinery. He describes his work and the employment strategies of young Irishmen:

> Road work, we did roads as well, motorways and what have you. So did a lot of the lads that went over even though a lot of them now didn't have a trade. They got into the construction and they picked up little bits. What they did they, you see, you'd be six months working at a job and you'd get to know how things were done, you moved onto the next company. As far as they were concerned now you were an experienced carpenter or bricklayer or a plasterer or whatever you wanted to be, you know. They didn't know you were only after doing six months further down the road. That's the way it was.

[36] Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.136. O'Shea quotes a similar figure of 80 percent (*The Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy Scheme*, p.10). Delaney writes that in the 1960s only 20 percent of Irish immigrants in Britain had any secondary education and the same proportion are described as middle-class (*The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.32, p.92). A recent study based on 2011 UK census figures shows that of Irish-born people over age 65, 57 percent have no qualifications, 17 percent have below degree-level qualifications, 9 percent have other qualifications, and 17 percent have degree-level qualifications. Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), 'How Are Ethnic Inequalities in Education Changing?' (March 2014).

Unquestioning hiring practices stemmed from the ready supply of cheap labour, but for some migrants learning on the job could have tragic consequences: 'There was a lad killed who fell off the scaffold onto a tarpaulin sheet and then went through there. He was a young lad, somebody had said he was a scaffolder in Ireland, and he came over to this country and they employed him and let him go to work and of course he hadn't been a scaffolder in Ireland, at all, and was killed. He was only 23 [sic].'[37] Poor health and safety conditions, a lack of regulations or oversight, and profit-driven management unfortunately led to such occurrences, but men continued to take risks for the high wages they could earn.[38]

Martin Niland also hints at another facet of working life: the tendency to continually move 'further down the road'. They became 'modern nomads' ('*fánaithe na haoise*').[39] Recollections of work experiences highlight the high levels of transiency among Irishmen in the construction industry:

> JIMMY Ó CEANNABHÁIN: I lived in London, I lived in Birmingham, I lived in Nottingham, I lived in a lot of places. But that's how it was. You might have a couple of weeks work here, then you move with the contract to some other place and back and forth.
>
> JOHN GILDEA: I travelled around quite a bit. I lived in Birmingham, Coventry, Sculthorpe, Leeds, a while in Scotland, but most of my time I spent in the London borough of Croydon, that was the longest time I was anywhere… Travelling for work, yeah. Typical Irishman.[40]
>
> DANNY MEEHAN: I went to Selby in '57… Progressed on from there then, went to various places. Ended up in Wales. You had a lot of freedom: if you didn't like the ganger man or if you didn't like your digs you just moved on. Wanderlust. The wanderlust was in me anyway always. The curse of the travelling man… It's just it's in your blood, you know, the wanderlust.

While men like Danny conceive of their movements in positive terms, emphasizing their own agency and 'freedom', English employers and commentators often viewed the trait in a negative light, calling the Irish 'too mobile' and unreliable.[41] Sociologist A.J.M. Sykes commented on their 'intense individualism' and 'dissociation', 'shown

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[37] Vic Heath, former scaffolder, quoted in Building Workers' Stories, *Building the Barbican 1962-1982* (University of Westminster & Leverhulme Trust, 2012), p.19.

[38] Ronnie Johnston & Arthur McIvor, 'Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside Heavy Industries, c.1930-1970s', *Labour History Review*, vol.69, no.2 (Aug. 2004), pp.144-5.

[39] Risteard de Paor, *Úll i mBarr Ghéagáin* (Sáirséal agus Dill, Baile Átha Cliath, 1959), p.182; Richard Power, *Apple on the Treetop*, trans. Victor Power (Poolbeg, Dublin, 1980), pp.189-90. A more literal translation would be 'wanderers of the age' or 'wanderers of the era'.

[40] Sculthorpe may be Scunthorpe, but from the recording it sounds like a 'l'. Sulthorpe is in Norfolk and has a military airbase.

[41] Wills, 'Realism and the Irish Immigrant', p.384; Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.200; Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity*, pp.25-6; Ferdynand Zweig, *The British Worker* (Penguin Books, Harmondworth, Middlesex, UK, 1952), pp.50-1.

by the lack of interest the navvies had in improving conditions in the industry… The reaction of navvies to exceptionally bad conditions in a camp was to move to another camp.'[42] Theirs was a particular form of resistance, one more common than trade union membership or activism.[43] However, when it came to big projects such as the M1 motorway, firms needed a mobile workforce and depended heavily on the Irish because they could not source all labour locally.[44] They may have had other reasons too: when asked why contractors hired Irishmen if the English seemed more reliable, a retired labourer answered, 'most of them left Ireland with no education, no money, just to get away from fleas, and hunger, and clay floors. The hungry people emigrated; they would do twice the work, for half the money, and they would do it faster!'[45]

Liam Farrell tells two anecdotes that highlight the value placed on doing hard work and doing it well. An inability to keep the pace led to mockery, even among friends:

> I worked on a building site, we worked, there was two Mayo men and they had work way down in Kent and I worked with them and they wouldn't give you a job unless you were a musician. I'll tell you who the gang was. The gang, can you imagine, all a bit younger, was Bobby Casey, Mairtín Byrnes, me, Raymond Roland, and Johnny Collins, great flute player. That was the gang… Johnny Collins was a very strong man, a great digger, and me and Johnny Collins were doing most of the heavy work, the heavy digging, because I was always good on that… We had to dig these holes and some of them were three foot by three foot by six foot deep. And then I was always doing the six foot ones with Johnny Collins and that, and I had Raymond with me of course. You had to dig these holes and then timber them all up and then every couple days we filled them up with concrete and put posts in them and that. But Mairtín Byrnes, when we'd be all ready to go Mairtín Byrnes would be still digging! 'Liam Farrell, can you drop me?' 'If you put your finger out and go a bit faster you'd be up with the rest of us!' He was dead lazy!

The hiring of an all-musician work gang in the late 1950s points to the importance of music in forming social networks, as well as the respect others in the Irish community had for its practitioners. However, it seems being a well-known musician

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[42] AJM Sykes, 'Navvies: Their Social Relations', *Sociology*, vol.3, no.2 (May 1969), p.165. Zweig, came to similar conclusions in *The British Worker*, pp.27, 35.

[43] Pat Ayers, 'Work, Culture and Gender: The Making of Masculinities in Post-War Liverpool', *Labour History Review*, vol.69, no.2 (Aug. 2004), p.157.

[44] As many as half the workers on the M1 may have been Irish, with Dónall Mac Amhlaigh among their ranks. Overall the workforce was diverse and included men from all parts of Britain, continental Europe, South Asia, and the West Indies. Building Workers' Stories, *Building the M1 Motorway* (University of Westminster & Leverhulme Trust, 2012); Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties', p.9; Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker & Peggy Seeger, *Song of a Road* (BBC, 1959; Topic Records, 2008).

[45] B. O'Grady, quoted in Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.194.

did not mean a complete escape from the expectations of one's fellow workers! The second anecdote relates to a more recent time, but exhibits the same ethos:

> I was doing this concreting and the fellow with me was giving the instructions to pump the concrete in there and I was in there, no bother at all. But Brian said to me, 'you need some help there'. I said, 'I don't, I'm used to this', I said. I was always a good worker. I said 'I don't need any help, I'm just in there getting the concrete'. Next thing Brian came in and a pair of those shoes on him and jumped into the concrete, just a pair of shoes on him and I said, 'for God's sake get away'. I didn't even need any help. I was well able to do it. He said, 'no you need some help in there'. I said, 'I don't need any help'. Next thing he jumped in with a pair of low shoes… You'd want to see the state of his feet covered in concrete.

Though he tells both stories in a humorous tone, they show the value he placed on his reputation as 'a good worker' and ability to do a job well and to do it quickly. Official statistics may have classed men such as Liam as 'unskilled' labourers, but they saw themselves as more than that, taking pride in doing the dirtiest or most difficult jobs (and welcoming the higher wages those jobs offered).[46]

Faced with unsafe working conditions and hard labour, the ethos that emerges from navvy narratives is one of strength and individualism coupled with what a commentator called the 'comradeship of adversity', the companionship of like-minded men.[47] This existed among men involved in heavy labour generally, but the long history of the Irish navvy meant they could claim it as part of their identity.[48] Songs from the period – such as 'Men of '39', 'McAlpine's Fusiliers', 'Building Up and Tearing England Down', 'The Tunnel Tigers' and 'Murphy's Volunteers' – hint at this legacy and glorify the men and their work in heroic terms (lyrics in Appendix 4). Danny Meehan migrated at age sixteen in 1957 and reflected on the characteristics and values of the men he worked with over the years:

> I had a lot of kindred spirits over there. Men who were like me, you know. They loved the hard work and they loved the fun in the pubs and they loved the music. They weren't men for getting married for no obvious reason but that they didn't want to get tied down and they couldn't always relate well to other people, you see. Most of them loved women to death but living with one the rest of your life didn't make a lot of sense. Do you know what I mean? It's hard to explain it but that's the way it was… But those men were always well valued by contractors and all that because they had a lot of energy. They could do the job well and a bit of hard work never phased

[46] Kevin Henry chose to work blasting tunnels in mines and in compressed air in tunnels on construction sites because 'there was more money in the tunnels' and 'there was good money in compressed air, if you could take it.'
[47] Foley, *Three Villages*, p.54.
[48] Arthur McIvor, *Working Lives: Work in Britain since 1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2013), pp.89-90; Johnston & McIvor, 'Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies', pp.135-51.

> them so the contractors all loved that certain breed of man who travelled from job to job and if he had a decent dry warm bed he didn't need any fancy decorations or anything, you needed to get your head down, you know.

The phrase 'kindred spirits' suggests that he clearly counts himself among their ranks. He prizes their independence and propensity for hard work without needing 'fancy decorations' or to be 'tied down' and says that employers recognized the value in those traits. Danny also highlights the masculinity of their world and the difficulties they may have felt trying to socialize with women.

Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin adds to these values a concrete sense of their roots in Ireland: 'You met them from every county in Ireland and we were all on the same boat. Looking for work we were, there was no talk of unemployment or anything like that… We had to help ourselves, we didn't get any handouts, we didn't look for it, we looked for a job… We didn't get nothing but what we earned and proud of it.' Both Jimmy and Danny speak in the plural, using 'they' and 'we', which suggests that solidarity based on ethnic identity, or even more localized identities, acted counter to the individualism of the navvy Sykes described. The feeling that 'we were all in the same boat' offered some comfort. John Gildea says, 'I worked in a factory one time, in a brewery, but I just couldn't stick it, I liked to be with the Irish.'[49] He desired the companionship of friends and fellow Irishmen on the building sites more than having a steady, indoor job in isolation.[50] Unlike rural Ireland, theirs was a community 'of isolated individuals grouped together by nationality, friendship and – most noticeably – gender.'[51]

Young men joined their compatriots on the building sites shortly after their arrival and this sense of companionship helped them adjust. Packie Browne, arriving from rural Kerry at age twenty, got a job with twenty to thirty others from his locality as well as English workers. He tells humorous stories about the challenge of language differences and a new vocabulary:

> The hardest thing I found when I went to London was the different way they had of saying things. It was hard to get into. Like, I knew a toilet as a toilet,

[49] Kevin Casey's recollections support this as a general trend: 'Not a lot of Irishmen went into factories. They preferred the identity of being on the buildings because they all knew each other. There was a closeness there, a clanship.' In Dunne, *An Unconsidered People*, p.63.
[50] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh suggests that many building workers sought employment in factories during the winter when construction work went slack, but they could not stand being indoors in fine weather: 'Each winter you would hear of men lucky enough to have "got in" who swear they will never lift a shovel or push a barrow again, but predictably, their resolution never outlasts the spring'. 'Getting In', *Irish Times*, 25 Dec. 1969.
[51] Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.119.

> but the Englishman called it the Jacks. We had two clerk of works on the job and both of their names were Jack, so this English fellow came up to me one day and he said, 'hey Pat,' he said, 'where are the Jacks?' 'Oh,' I said, 'you just missed them, they walked up around the corner'! And he's looking at me and thinking 'is this fellow for real?' you know? So it's things like that…
>
> And then like, you know, there was a set of chains and they're called brothers, and then some fellow said to me 'have you seen the brothers?' And there was two or three sets of brothers [siblings] on the job and I said 'which set are you looking for?' He goes 'is there more than one?' 'There is' I said, 'there's three!' There was three different pairs of brothers. It's things like that.

While the differences between Hiberno-English and the Queen's English and unfamiliar terminology may have caused some misunderstandings or occasions for laughter, they could also draw attention to Irish migrants' alterity from British society.

Irish-speaking migrants faced a more substantial barrier to adjustment. Johnny Connolly says, 'I had no English at all when I went over, but the bit of English I learned there was from our own people that had very broken English. We picked up bit by bit.' He found it difficult initially and recalled one man who showed empathy:

> I remember there was a Polish fellow, he was the agent on the job and he came to me one day to explain to me how he wanted me to do something and I hadn't a clue what he was saying, so he went to one of the lads that was a kind of ganger man on the job and he said to him, 'you better,' he said, 'go up to that young fellow,' he said, 'and explain to him because,' he said, 'he hasn't a clue what I'm saying'. Like the Polish fellow himself I suppose he wouldn't have been that easy to understand, but even if he was I hadn't a clue, I wouldn't have a clue what he was saying. So it was funny! [*Laughs*] But he was a very, very nice man. Once I got to know a few words he used, I think he felt sorry for me really, because I was young enough at the time as well. Just things that sticks to your mind all the time.

Instances of kindness or humour seem as likely to 'stick in the mind' as do tales or hardship or discrimination. Contemporary accounts often single out Connemara men as the hardest workers, the heaviest drinkers, the toughest fighters, and the most likely to keep to their own kind.[52] However, this may have stemmed from an inability to communicate fluently in English adding to the burden of culture shock, rather than an anti-social nature or exclusivity. Dónall Mac Amhlaigh commented that Gaeltacht

[52] Dónall MacAmhlaigh praises them for these qualities, but admits that they stuck to their own. For example, describing a day he worked filling trenches, he says, '*níl aon Sasanach i ngar dúinn ach ár muintir féin ar fad. As Ros Muc agus an gCeathrú Rua formhór mór na leads seo agus níl thar triúr Béarlóirí ina measc*.' *Dialann Deoraí*, p.37. ['There isn't an Englishman anywhere near us; they're all our own people. Most of the lads are from Rosmuc and Carraroe, and only about three of our gang speak English.' *An Irish Navvy*, p.38.]

people in Britain retain 'their native tongue' not because of material inducements or nationalist sentiments but 'for that soundest and most durable reason of all – that it is their best means of communicating with each other'.[53]

Though the construction industry is most prevalently associated with Irishmen, they worked in a wide range of occupations. Those undertaken by interviewees in this study include: agricultural labourer, coal miner, factory worker, shoe repairer, shop manager, television technician, fireman, policeman, and tailor. The ready availability of employment in the period facilitated entry into these jobs and switches between them. Sean Chamberlain also suggests that being young, single, and in a city with lots of opportunities contributed:

> I did every kind of a job that you ever heard of. I worked for five or six years as a bus man and then I worked as a so-called manager of a radio and television shop, then I decided I'd be a fitter, so I got a job in a factory [and] I never knew anything about the stuff but I went in as a trainee and I was quick enough to pick it up and I worked away there for four or five years. I left that then and I decided 'this is not for me, I'm going to be a professional musician', so I said, 'lads, I'm out of here' and we were doing well, we could afford to do it and all the time… See, when you're young, when you're twenty-five you don't give a shit about anything, no worries about where's the next meal or clothes, as long as you've a packet of fags, that was the big thing that we were worried about!

Jocular and irreverent, Sean freely describes his wild youth. Unlike many post-war migrants he had completed his Leaving Certificate, which may have opened opportunities to him. Coming from a town rather than a rural area may also explain why he did not work in the construction industry. For the men that shared his carefree lifestyle the desire to settle down and hold a steady job might come with maturity or marriage, after the enthusiasm of youth had spent itself. At that point, some, Sean included, decided to return to Ireland, where the skills they had learned in Britain helped them to start a new life (see Chapter 5).

Over time a transient lifestyle could factor into other problems, including ethnic invisibility, mental health, poverty, and homelessness.[54] Scholars have suggested that unlike in the United States, the Irish who remained in Britain, and Irishmen in particular, did not achieve upward social mobility, instead remaining 'amongst the disadvantaged', with high rates of ill health and always a backward

[53] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Gaeltacht in Exile – a report from "over there"', *Irish Times*, 30 July 1970.

[54] It is these types of 'problems' that have received the most press. A 'one-night' survey carried out in inner London in October 1972 found up to 2,000 people 'living rough', of which 40 percent were Irish. O'Shea, *Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy Scheme*, p.60. See also: *Men of Arlington*, documentary film, directed by Brendan J. Byrne (Hotshot Films, 2010).

glance towards Ireland.[55] However, while those problems have persisted to the present day, focus on them shows only one side of the coin. For some who left Ireland with no formal qualifications the opportunity to gain both skills and experience in different jobs played an important role in their career development. Roger Sherlock says,

> I had no trade when I left. When I was in the construction it was very hard, very heavy and I used to work six days a week and I was playing five nights… I started evening classes, going to classes and I learned a trade then, carpentry. I got through that in two years and qualified, and that was much easier, much lighter, and suited me of course with the music then.

Billy Clifford worked in electronics and recalls the widespread availability of employment and the role this played in gaining expertise:

> People'd just be hopping in and out of jobs. There was so many jobs available, I suppose. Everything was booming at the time in the '60s over there. You'd have no bother getting a job. In the earlier times I would've been at the apprentice stage and I got kicked around a bit and horrible old bits of jobs where you knew you were never going to learn anything or you knew you weren't going to get anyplace, you knew you were wasting your time. So you'd only stick them for six months or maybe a year and then you'd go on to try and get something a bit better. Eventually I built up the knowledge and that was it then.

He estimates that in ten years he had at least fifteen jobs and the experience stood to him. He became a television technician and got a job in Tipperary where he lives to this day.

Of course, Irishmen worked in white-collar jobs in this period as well, but they constituted a much smaller proportion of the population and had few points of encounter with the working class. Kevin O'Connor quotes an unnamed individual who said of the two groups: 'there was simply no meaningful contact. We stuck to our circuit and they stuck to theirs' and when they did happen to meet 'they always struck me as being embarrassed when we met and when I told them I was a carpenter… though we both had our best suits on and no doubt could have had a lot in common to talk about… Mind you, I was from Mayo, and these people perhaps would be from a city such as Dublin or Cork.'[56] Consciousness of class differences

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[55] Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.202; Liam Greenslade, 'An Tonn Gheal: Historical Reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain in the 1980s', in Buckland & Belchem (eds.), *The Irish in British Labour History*, p.36; Desmond Fisher, 'The Irishman in England', *The Furrow*, vol.9, no.4 (Apr. 1958), pp.230-5; Patrick J. Bracken & Patrick O'Sullivan, 'The Invisibility of Irish Migrants in British Health Research', *Irish Studies Review*, vol.9, no.1 (2001), pp.41-51.

[56] O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain*, p.48. Except for this passage, overall O'Connor is much more positive about the Irish in Britain in the 1950s than other writers and it seems his sentiments might only apply to a relatively select group.

and their relationship to the rural/urban divide in Irish society meant that these groups rarely mixed, even favouring different social venues (see section III below).

Women's Work and the Welfare State

While songs and stories mythologized the role of Irishmen in 'building Britain' and 'Mick' or 'Paddy' dominated the stereotypes, no equivalents exist for women's roles. That they often worked in the service industry or in domestic-oriented occupations rendered them even more 'invisible' than their male counterparts.[57] Early studies of the Irish in Britain by John A. Jackson and Kevin O'Connor neglect them almost entirely. Women had few career opportunities in Ireland, with the marriage bar on primary-school teachers in place until 1958 and on civil service positions until 1973. Even without legal restrictions, the prevailing view – written into the constitution – held that upon marriage a woman should 'make' the home. For those who rejected that position or found it untenable, Britain offered an alternative and they entered a diverse range of jobs as hotel staff, domestic servants, factory workers, transport workers, teachers, typists, midwives, and nurses (see Appendix 3, table 7). The latter occupations draw particular attention to the fact that Irish women were more likely than men to hold skilled or semi-skilled jobs and to obtain a greater degree of social mobility.[58] This section uses a case study of women who worked in health services to juxtapose their construction of occupational, ethnic, and gendered identities to that of the male labourers discussed in the previous section.

In taking up nursing Irish women embarked upon a career path unavailable to most at home, where it had higher educational entry requirements, a training fee, and ended upon marriage.[59] Anna Hennigan recalled 'my ambition in life was to become a nurse' but she needed sixty guineas to train at the North Infirmary Hospital in Cork City.[60] The fee exceeded the normal means of her family if not for the fact that her father won the money betting on a horse. After completing her training she got married and left the position, but took up nursing again upon migrating to England

[57] Ryan, 'Family Matters', p.353; Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women* (Routledge, London, 2001), pp.1-2.
[58] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, p.199. On the 1951 *Census of England & Wales* Irish-born women made up 6.24 percent of the total women in 'professions' (mostly nurses and teachers), 3.88 percent of those in 'personal service', and 1.06 percent of clerks. These three categories comprised 22.43, 39.02, and 9.28 percent of the total female Irish-born population respectively.
[59] Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.203.
[60] Anna Hennigan, interview with Nora Kenny, 6 Nov. 2013, *Oral History @UCC*.

with her husband and children a few years later. She says, 'I decided I'd go back to work and it was the best thing I ever did', enabled by the fact that the hospital opened a nursery where she could leave her older child while a neighbour looked after the baby.[61] However, she was unusual in that she trained in Ireland and then joined the nursing register in England. Most Irish nurses trained in Britain where the establishment of the National Health Service in 1946 created a demand for staff, with more vacant positions than numbers completing training.[62] One migrant commented on the propensity of Irish women to fill this demand, recalling, 'in my hospital alone, in Manchester, when I came over first, there were eighteen girls from Crossmolina in Mayo! You didn't have to pay, you see, your training was free. And I think that the regime here wasn't nearly as harsh as in Ireland.' [63] Trainees received accommodation, meals, and wages and in 1946 alone the NHS recruited 3,000 Irish

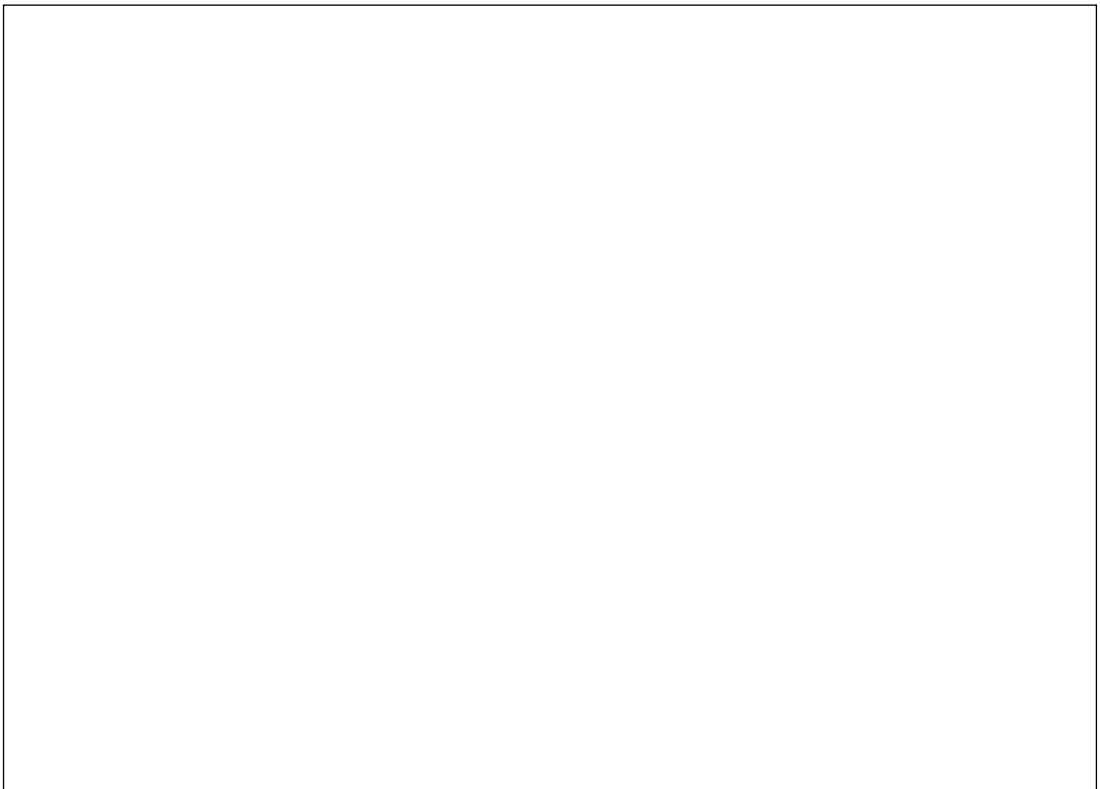


Image 4.4: Promotional image of trainee nurses in the 1950s at Doncaster Gate Hospital, South Yorkshire. Source: Doncaster Gate Hospital Heritage Project, <http://www.doncastergateheritage.org.uk/>.

[61] Ibid. Women's narratives overall depict the 'greater economic independence and personal freedom' available to them in England compared to Ireland'. Louise Sheridan, 'More than One Story to Tell: Exploring Twentieth-Century Migration to Northampton, England in Memoir and Oral Narratives', *Irish Review*, vol.44 (2012), p.96.

[62] Julia Hallam, 'Nursing the Image: Popular Fictions, Recruitment and Nursing Identity' (Ph.D. diss., University of Warwick, 1995), p.134.

[63] Sheila Dillon (alias) in Dunne, *An Unconsidered People*, pp.158-9; Mary Daly comments on the differences between nursing in Ireland and England in *The Slow Failure*, p.172.

women.[64] They joined numerous others from continental Europe and the New Commonwealth countries: 'you see you wouldn't be lonely because a lot of staff did the same thing [left home] and the majority would have been Irish, and English and Africans and others and Polish and that sort of thing, but the majority were Irish.'[65] In statistical terms the Irish accounted for twelve percent of the total nursing staff in 1971 and some hospitals had higher proportions.[66] Emphasis on their prominence in personal narratives highlights the perceived importance of their role. Without migrant women the NHS could never have fulfilled its remit, though they remain largely absent from its image and official histories.[67]

The Irish regarded nursing with pride, as a skilled, feminine, middle-class profession. Its relative exclusivity in Ireland and higher status compared to domestic service or factory work contributed to this view.[68] The government and Catholic hierarchy, though against female emigration because of the perceived risk of immorality, favoured the nursing profession, drawing on its image as a 'vocation' akin to religious service.[69] Class divisions persisted in Britain, with Irish nurses warned against socializing with male labourers: 'We had a wonderful warden, she was a senior sister from Cork. And she was very much of the old school and she would say "you don't want to be going down to that Garryowen place [a dance hall], you know, they are all working on the roads and buildings"'.[70] Contrary to this image, English women increasingly saw nursing less favourably, associating it with long hours, difficult work, and low pay. Many opted to withdraw from the workplace entirely, favouring the discourses of domesticity and maternity at the centre of post-war British femininity and identity.[71] Despite the increasing difficulty of attracting and retaining white, middle-class, English women in nursing, they continued to enjoy a favoured status in recruitment (see image 4.4). They dominate its image in

[64] Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', p.163,
[65] This anonymous interviewee trained as a nurse and midwife in London from c.1949-1952. A31, Life Histories, IQDA.
[66] Louise Ryan, 'Who Do You Think You Are? Irish Nurses Encountering Ethnicity and Constructing Identity in Britain', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.30, no.3 (May 2007), p.417.
[67] Julian M. Simpson, Aneez Esmail, Virinder S. Kalra & Stephanie J. Snow, 'Writing Migrants back into NHS History: Addressing a "Collective Amnesia" and Its Policy Implication', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, vol.103, no.10 (Oct. 2010), p.393; McDowell, *Working Lives*, pp.107-8.
[68] Kiely & Leane, *Irish Women at Work*, pp.22-3, 66-70.
[69] Henrietta Ewart, 'Protecting the Honour of the Daughters of Éire: Welfare Policy for Irish Female Migrants to England, 1940-70', *Irish Studies Review*, vol.21, no.1 (2013), p.78; Walter, *Outsiders Inside*, p.179.
[70] Clodagh, migrated in 1958, quoted in Ryan, 'Irish Nurses Encountering Ethnicity', p.423.
[71] Ewart, 'Protecting the Honour of the Daughters of Éire', pp.78-9; McDowell, *Working Lives*, p.34, p.80; Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (Routledge, London & New York, 2004), p.50.

the public imagination to the present day, such as in the popular BBC television series *Call the Midwife*, based on the memoirs of an East London nurse in the 1950s.[72] Beneath this a hierarchy of preference operated, with women from the Baltic States at the top, followed by the Irish and European Catholics, and New Commonwealth immigrants at the bottom of the ladder.[73]

Migrant women experienced discrimination in varying forms: they found themselves channelled towards the State Enrolled Nurse (SEN) track rather than State Registered Nursing (SRN), the latter a higher qualification, and pushed towards less popular or prestigious fields such as geriatrics.[74] Irish women could also face discrimination in hiring practices: 'I applied to work at King George's. I was told they weren't accepting Irish nurses. There was nothing I could do about it and Barnardos wouldn't take Catholics.'[75] Religion could cause tension because Catholic nurses had to negotiate time off on Sundays to attend mass. Nonetheless, the matter-of-fact way in which she makes this statement suggests that Irish migrants in Britain accepted the 'normality' of prejudice to a degree. Other nurses confronted pre-existing stereotypes of the Irish as dirty or undomesticated, countering these with the articulation of positive traits: 'Irish nurses have always been highly respected… Irish workers are greatly appreciated in branches of the caring professions because of their natural empathy, and in other occupations involving hard work. They usually mix well and have a good sense of humour.'[76] In emphasizing that Irish women do not shy away from occupations requiring 'hard work' she articulates some of the same values as Irish men. While Julia Hallam's research draws attention to the absence of representations of women of colour from 'all forms of discourse related to the nursing profession', she concomitantly neglects the nuances of ethnicity and

[72] The first image of a non-white trainee nurse appeared in recruitment literature in 1964 (Hallam, 'Nursing the Image', p.173). Jennifer Worth, *Call the Midwife: A Memoir of Birth, Joy, and Hard Times* (Penguin Books, New York, 2012).
[73] Hallam, 'Nursing the Image', pp.161, 189; McDowell, *Working Lives*, p.81; Wendy Webster, 'Transnational Journeys and Domestic Histories', *Journal of Social History*, vol.39, no.3 (Spring 2006), pp.658-9.
[74] Experiences of discrimination varied considerably between hospitals. 'G' who came to Yorkshire from Barbados in 1961 said, 'A lot of us didn't know [about the SRN option] until we got here. They never let us know over there. And they used to decide – favouritism, I guess – who they sent to do Enrolled nursing and who they sent to do the General.' 'Ly', also from Barbados, says 'in those days foreign nurses as well were placed mainly on the geriatric wards'. Hallam, 'Nursing the Image', pp.348, 367. See also: McDowell, *Working Lives*, pp.111-13; Ryan, 'Irish Nurses Encountering Ethnicity', pp.427-8; Walter, *Outsiders Inside*, p.187.
[75] Bridie, Bernie O'Callaghan Collection, Reminiscences Collection, AIB LMU.
[76] Nurse who migrated in 1949, in Walter, *Outsiders Inside*, p.183.

prejudice that complicate the black/white binary.[77] Accounts of discrimination challenge the assumption that Irish women entered the workforce and host society with greater ease than their male counterparts.[78]

While men's recollections depict building sites as largely 'Irish' spaces, women construct the hospitals and accommodation attached to them as sites of encounter with other Irish migrants, ethnic groups, and members of the host population. Margaret O'Toole came to England in 1955 from Co. Derry and worked in Bethnal Green Hospital in London with many other Irish women and she says, 'we were all in the same boat'; the same feeling Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin articulated.[79] The friendship of others in similar circumstances had the power to transform England from a strange and foreign place into a familiar one.[80] Eileen Hanley recalls the emotional impact of discrimination and the empathy it engendered:

> The companionship of so many immigrant girls was comforting. Religion, music and dance formed our identity and were the social outlets from which we gained strength. I could not understand why all foreigners were classed inferior. Often I cried at the way even the black doctors were spoken to and white English patients frequently refused to be examined by them. All this upset me morally and brought me closer to my black friends, the students. I felt such utter shame at it all.[81]

In this anecdote, 'foreignness' operates as the primary marker of difference, though skin colour is its most obvious manifestation. Although largely English-speaking and white, Irish nurses could still feel like 'outsiders' and those who worked in hospitals with few of their countrywomen or other migrants often felt isolated in a hostile 'English' environment.[82] In their leisure hours they sought out familiar faces and accents in their accommodation and at Irish dance halls, but, as this section illustrates, their identities developed from encounters not only with the host society, but also pre-existing conceptions of their occupation and interactions with members of other migrant groups.

'No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs'

In a much-publicized speech in Galway on 29 August 1951 Taoiseach Éamon de Valera stated:

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[77] Hallam, 'Nursing the Image', p.186.
[78] O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity in Post-War Birmingham', pp.152-3.
[79] Margaret O'Toole, Bernie O'Callaghan Collection, Reminiscences Collection, AIB LMU.
[80] Ryan, 'Irish Nurses Encountering Ethnicity', p.423.
[81] Eileen Hanley, Bernie O'Callaghan Collection, Reminiscences Collection, AIB LMU.
[82] Ryan, 'Irish Nurses Encountering Ethnicity', pp.426-8; Walter, *Outsiders Inside*.

> In reports which I have received the conditions of Irish workers in some English cities are, as I said on a previous occasion, described as appalling… There was already a serious housing shortage, and with the influx of new workers the shortage has been intensified to an alarming extent. The Irish emigrants who have been attracted to these cities are, a large number of them, living in conditions of absolute degradation… In one house fifty Irish workers are lodged, fifteen of them sleeping in one room. They pay £2 a week each for this accommodation, and they have to provide and cook their own food… The accommodation shortage is exploited by avaricious landlords, and the prestige of our people generally suffers by the suggestion that "anything is good enough for the Irish".[83]

He relied primarily upon a document titled 'Some Notes on the Situation of Irish Workers in Birmingham' written by Maurice Foley, an organizer for the Young Christian Workers' Association, and reports from the Irish Ambassador in London, F.H. Boland.[84] De Valera hoped the speech might deter prospective migrants, saying 'the saddest part of all this is that work is available at home and in conditions infinitely better from the point of view of both health and morals.'[85] However, that statement raised considerable ire and overall had the unintended effect of drawing attention to the government's failure to provide alternatives. One migrant wrote a few days later, 'I, as an Irishman from the West of Ireland, challenge Mr. de Valera, or any one of his party, to find me a job in Ireland as good, or nearly as good, as the job I have got here in Birmingham and as good living conditions. Ireland will be a second Paradise to me if they manage to do what I ask of them.'[86] Somehow it seems unlikely that Fianna Fáil complied.

Though the report of fifty men in one house with fifteen to a bedroom seems extreme, living conditions did leave much to be desired. In the cities, bomb damage from the Second World War and a population boom following demobilization created a housing crisis.[87] Estimates range from 116,000 to 200,000 homes destroyed in London alone, with at least 250,000 damaged.[88] Though the central government and local councils attempted to alleviate the problems, constructing almost three

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[83] 'Irish Workers in England Degraded', *Irish Independent*, 30 Aug. 1951, p.5.
[84] Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, pp.97-100; James Moran, *Irish Birmingham: A History* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2010), pp.173-4.
[85] 'Irish Workers in England Degraded', *Irish Independent*, 30 Aug. 1951, p.5.
[86] John Mulchrone, 'Letters to the Editor: Irish Workers in England', *Irish Independent*, 4 Sept. 1951, p.8.
[87] John Stevenson, 'The Jerusalem that Failed? The Rebuilding of Post-War Britain', in Terry Gourvish & Alan O'Day (eds.), *Britain since 1945* (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1991), pp.97-8.
[88] The Ridley Committee in 1945 found 200,000 homes destroyed by bombs and 250,000 seriously damaged in London. The Holland Report in 1965 gave figures of 116,000 and 288,000 respectively. Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', p.103.

million houses between 1950 and 1964, demand outstripped availability.[89] With council houses in short supply and English-born people given preferential treatment, migrants found themselves forced to turn to the private sector, where they faced dilapidated and overcrowded conditions and racist or extortionist landlords in a market that favoured owners over tenants. In England in 1961, 60 percent of English, 73 percent of Caribbeans, 74 percent of South Asians, and 74 percent of Irish rented in the private sector, while 25 percent of English, 1 percent of Caribbeans, 3 percent of South Asians, and 15 percent of Irish lived in council housing.[90] Overall the 'government is generally agreed to have failed renters, immigrant or otherwise, in the period.'[91]

Many women, employed in hospitals or hotels, had live-in jobs, but men often fared worse. Construction workers lived in camps or short-term 'digs' in the nearest town and some reported sharing beds in rented accommodation.[92] Workers on the Scottish hydroelectric schemes lived in temporary camps or former military barracks.[93] Martin McMahon grew up in a small cottage in west Clare with no electricity or running water, but he had little positive to say about living conditions in London:

> It was rough. The only thing is you had youth. The room I stayed in, 1963, there was no glass in the window, so in weather like this now, it was snowing, it was a very bad year 1963. It snowed for six months in England. I'd wake up in the morning to go to work and there'd be a foot of snow up on the top of me. I wouldn't call that luxury living, would you? I remember even that year, you know the skips for the rubbish? The big ones that trucks drop down on the pavement. You'd be looking at a skip coming home and

[89] Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', p.111; Stevenson, 'The Jerusalem that Failed?', pp.98-100.
[90] Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', pp.113-5. The Rent Act of 1957 worsened the situation for tenants by decontrolling rents and taking away security of tenure. In addition, immigrant tenants often did not know their rights under existing legislation. The 1965 Milner-Holland Report on housing in London found that only an estimated 11 percent of advertised lettings were not explicitly racist. Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain*, pp.207-8.
[91] Slum clearance and re-housing schemes 'undermined traditional working-class communities and led to social isolation on new suburban housing estates… High-density, high-rise housing estates in inner-city areas built during the 1960s proved to be a planning failure.' Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Living Standards and Consumption', in P. Addison & H. Jones (eds.), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000* (The Historical Association & Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005), p.234; Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', p.105; Stevenson, 'The Jerusalem that Failed?', pp.103-4; Selina Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class, 1910-2010* (John Murray, London, 2014), pp.162-4, 187-8. These present less optimistic view than that advanced by John Grindrod, *Concretopia: A Journey around the Rebuilding of Postwar Britain* (Old Street Publishing, Brecon, 2013).
[92] de Paor, *Úll i mBarr an Ghéagáin*, p.160; Power, *Apple on the Treetop*, p.168; Mac Amhlaigh, *Dialann Deoraí*, p.70; Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navvy*, p.73; Ó Ciaráin, *Farewell to Mayo*, p.94.
[93] Vincent Campbell, interview with the author, 12 June 2012; Scottish and Southern Energy, *Power from the Glens* (Scottish and Southern Energy, Perth, n.d.), p.4.

> even if there was an old shoe in it, you'd bring it home and try and light it to make a fire. That's the mighty London.

He perhaps exaggerates somewhat to make his point. Even after they married, Martin and his wife Teresa had difficulties in their early years together:

> TERESA: A lot of the places you lived in in London, it was a strange place if you didn't own your own place and who did.
>
> MARTIN: We were going from room to room.
>
> TERESA: This was it. Then you couldn't make a sound, let alone an instrument.
>
> MARTIN: We had a room with our daughter, she was a baby then, about in 1965, and she [the landlady] was a Mayo woman who was married to a German. My work was clean work.
>
> TERESA: We just had one room and a little kitchen…
>
> MARTIN: Anyway, I'd be clean coming home from work because I was on clean work anyway and she'd make me take my shoes off at the front door.
>
> TERESA: And then she said to me, 'don't put your baby on the floor ever.' I had to keep her on the bed, couldn't put her on the floor. There was that type of thing. Then, there were places where, we were talking about no toilets in Ireland, indeed there was no toilets in some of the places, no bathrooms or anything… The thing that most of the immigrants got in London when they arrived was work.
>
> MARTIN: And money, which we didn't have in Ireland.
>
> TERESA: Which just wasn't here. But as for luxuries of any kind, there wasn't.

Migrants often shared cooking facilities and bathrooms, with at most a sink and a gas ring for cooking in their room. Landlords or landladies, knowing they could easily find other tenants, made a raft of restrictions including those Teresa mentioned, hours when tenants had to leave the house, a curfew at night, or bathing and laundry schedules. Despite the McMahon's bleak assessment of living conditions, they admit that they still found England preferable to Ireland, rejecting de Valera's argument.

In relation to housing, more so than any other aspect of their lives in Britain, migrants recall encountering anti-Irish discrimination. Long-standing stereotypes of the Irish as dirty, drunk, and lazy came into play. They also found themselves blamed for their own predicament, as in a Cabinet Report from 1955: 'Many of the Irish are accustomed to living in their own country in conditions which English people would not normally tolerate and are accordingly less discriminating in their

choice of accommodation here.'[94] Rather than judge a prospective tenant's character on an individual basis, landlords blanketed the group. Teresa McMahon recalls:

> In the '50s, I'd have to be fair, much as I don't like to say it because England turned out to be a great place, but there was an anti-Irish feeling at that time. Like for instance, one particular instance (these are the things that stay in your head), I was looking for a flat, or we were looking for a flat but Martin was at work and I was out looking for a flat or a room or whatever it was, and one place I can remember, the man said 'I'd really love to give you the flat, you seem alright, but it's just a pity you're Irish.' But he was very nice about it, but there was stuff like that going on.

She does not seem bitter about what happened, but other migrants had less sympathy for the perpetrators of discrimination. A woman who came to London in 1955 to train as a nurse searched for a flat with a friend after they had qualified:

> One day the girl from Trinidad and myself went looking for another flat. We discovered that there were lots of notices saying rooms to let, but No Irish and No Coloureds. We still knocked on the doors and discovered that some of the owners had actually been patients at the hospitals and we had nursed them. They were all English and said that we were lovely people, but they could not let rooms to us. We even met one Polish woman that we had particularly looked after when she was in hospital for a long time, even doing her washing and she said that she was very sorry but she could not let rooms to us. It was very upsetting. They just closed the door and forgot that you were there.[95]

These two women had a skilled occupation and yet still faced discrimination based on their ethnicity and skin colour. Signs displaying variants of 'No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs' have entered the collective memory of the Irish in Britain, much as the 'No Irish Need Apply' notices did in America. Because the former relates to a recent time period more evidence, in the form of oral histories and photographs, exists to prove the veracity of the story (see image 4.5 below).[96] These discriminatory notices disrupt the simplistic binaries of British/white versus immigrant/black.[97]

Some Irish people discriminated against their own kind, suggesting that it extended beyond the realm of ethnicity and in all cases landlords exploited unequal power relations. Ben Lennon recalls a landlady turning him and his wife out of the

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[94] 'Report of the Committee on the Social and Economic Problems Arising from the Growing Influx into the United Kingdom of Coloured Workers from other Commonwealth Countries' (signed W.H. Cornish), 3 Aug. 1955, CAB 129/77, p.2, NA UK. See also: O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity', p.176; and Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain*, p.204.

[95] Margaret O'Toole, Bernie O'Callaghan Collection, Reminiscences Collection, AIB LMU.

[96] Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.123; Richard Jensen, '"No Irish Need Apply": A Myth of Victimization', *Journal of Social History*, vol.36, no.2 (2002), pp.405-29; Donald M. MacRaild, '"No Irish Need Apply": The Origins and Persistence of a Prejudice', *Labour History Review*, vol.78, no.3 (2013), pp.297-8.

[97] Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945-64* (UCL Press, London, 1998), pp.x-xi.

house when they were expecting their first child: 'We got married in London in 1954. It was an Irish couple who we had rented part of their house. When Patsy was expecting, she said, "no children here, we don't want children in this house, you have to go when your child is born." That was it. She was an Irish woman. I couldn't believe it that time.'[98] He clearly expected more sympathy from one of his countrywomen and the incident remains stuck in his mind more than fifty years after he left England. Historical narratives suggest that this type of discrimination died down over the years as the housing market expanded and shifted to 'coloured' migrants as they arrived in greater numbers.[99] Teresa McMahon agrees with that appraisal of the situation, saying, 'there would be a lot of anti-Irish feeling in the '50s, it's just the way it was, that was it. But, when all the black people started to come in, because they really started to come in in their droves then, that took the heat off the Irish. Obviously, we were white.' Her statement dismisses the idea that the Irish could have 'became' white, while concomitantly highlighting the social hierarchies in operation.

However, the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland may have provided a new reason for landladies to discriminate. Vince Milne from Cork recalls a similar situation in 1971:

> I got a job down around Kingston so I went down looking to get a flat, you know, an apartment I suppose you'd say, in around Kingston. There was an ad for a flat in Surbiton, one of these terraced Victorian buildings, big three-storey, four-storey buildings with a basement with the big windows in the front and all that, lovely old houses, and there was an ad for a flat in one of these houses, so I went down. It happened to be an Irishwoman… she would have been in her 60s at that stage and she said, 'yes, I've a room, I've a flat for sale. Oh, are you Irish?' she said. I said, 'I am, yeah.' 'Oh, I really couldn't have you at all', she said, 'couldn't have you at all because the way things are going now at the moment we couldn't have Irish here'. She was Irish.

After this incident, Vince found accommodation next door in the house of an 'upper-crust English chap' with an 'accent like Prince Charles', a clear indicator of his social class. Vince stayed there for years, with many others from Ireland coming and going, earning it the nickname 'The Irish Centre'. Both Vince and Ben's stories suggest that while they might have accepted (or expected) discrimination from English people, they had hoped for more affinity with their own countrywomen.

[98] Having children exacerbated the problem of securing accommodation. Eamon Casey, 'Housing: Eamon Casey in Conversation with Peter Lemass', *The Furrow*, vol.15, no.9 (Sept. 1964), p.557.
[99] O'Connor writes, 'with cyclic inevitability coloured immigrants distracted attention away from the Irish as an alien presence'. *The Irish in Britain*, p.75; Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', pp.126-7.

Corbally proposes that landlords particularly discriminated against Irish*men* and migrants of colour (the latter group had a high proportion of young, single men) and the number of Irish females worked in the favour of that group.[100] However, as the examples above illustrate, women and married couples also faced prejudice. These anecdotes complicate the story of anti-Irish 'racism' that some scholars want to tell.[101] The Irish clearly encountered some discrimination on the housing market, but it had more layers of complexity than a simple black/white binary can explain.[102]



Image 4.5: 'Bed & Breakfast: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs': The date and photographer of this image are unknown, but Tony Murray says that when it was donated to the Irish in Britain History Group they had 'no reason to believe it was staged or to doubt its authenticity'. Source: Photographic Collection, AIB LMU.

[100] Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', pp.126-7, p.131.
[101] Mac an Ghaill, 'The Irish in Britain', regularly conflates ethnicity and race. Others such as Hickman and Walter say they want to question the concept of 'race' and yet instead of challenging its use or focusing on alternative terminology (such as ethnicity or difference) they still seem to see a black/white dichotomy and continue to speak of the Irish being 'racialized' or experiencing 'racism'. Hickman, 'Reconstructing Deconstructing "Race"', pp.288-307; Walter, *Outsiders Inside*.
[102] Wendy Webster, 'Immigration and Racism', in Addison & Jones (eds.), *Companion to Contemporary Britain*, p.102. Corbally convincingly argues that prejudice stemmed not from racism specifically, but from colonial attitudes, because the Irish, like their New Commonwealth counterparts, came from a country that had once been part of the empire. They were perceived as ethnic inferiors, undoubtedly, but being discriminated against did not automatically make them non-white, just as being fair-skinned did not automatically make them invisible within 'an undifferentiated, homogenous social group'. Corbally, 'Shades of Difference', p.272.

In housing, as in other areas of migrant life, no single, monolithic experience existed: some fared poorly, ending up in large hostels like Arlington House in Camden Town, while others found a good landlord and shared with friends. Packie Browne falls into the latter category and recalls of his accommodation in Kilburn:

> We had a nice place. There was three brothers and myself, we had a flat. It was, we had two bedrooms, a sitting room, a kitchen. It was nice. We kept it nice as well because we lived there and one of the brothers he was a bit older than us and he was kind of in charge. We gave him the money every week and he bought the food and looked after us and paid the rent. We had it done nice, we had a telly and a record player… It was nice. It wasn't home but it was okay.

Packie counted himself lucky to live with close friends, one of whom took responsibility to look after the others. While it 'wasn't home' its comfortable atmosphere lessened the isolation that young, single migrants could face. However, the fact that the majority resided in less than desirable conditions played a significant role in the way social and cultural life developed among Irish migrants. Kevin McDermott explains,

> The places where most people lived were single cold rooms. There was nothing, didn't even have a telly, so there was nothing to do but go down to the pub and see your friends. That's how a lot of the Irish got hooked on the alcohol. That was sad, but they were lonely, it was awful lonely. As a fire fighter I've been in many and many's a fire in rooms occupied by Irish and they were cold, just straightforward bed and the wardrobe was hooks on the wall. They'd just come in from work, quick wash, and down to the pub. The pub was the focal point. And that's where musicians came into their own because they were just dying to hear a bit of music from home. It was great, but it was very sad too.[103]

The rooms themselves were spartan and the landladies' restrictive rules pushed tenants to find accommodating social spaces elsewhere.[104] While most music-making and socializing took place within homes in rural Ireland (see Chapter 2), an inability to play music, or to make any noise at all, in rented accommodation in Britain compelled Irish migrants to seek alternative venues for their recreation.

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[103] Kevin McDermott, interview with the author, 10 Dec. 2011.

[104] A Mass Observation writer commented on this pattern in Dagenham in 1947-8: 'Some of these in digs were compelled to go out in the evenings and so they had to spend their leisure outside many finding it in the pub. For example, inv [sic] met two Irishmen in the Chequers, M.30.D and M.25.D who lived in the same digs in the local area. They were not allowed in the house during the evening, only to sleep and eat breakfast. They had to eat in cafes and spend their leisure hours outside. When they had little money, they used to go to the pictures but otherwise they spent their time in the pub. In comparison to these men inv met three Irishmen who were living in digs in Romford. They spent the majority of their evenings around the fire and only went out during the week to the pictures and for a drink during the week-end. They said that the Landlady was most kind and they had full board and lodgings. Inv would suggest that the question of lodgings plays an important part in the running of these mens' lives.' TC85 Drinking Habits 1939-63, Box 7 Pub Observations 1947-48, 85-7F Dagenham, Essex, MOA.

III. Music and Social Life

Unwelcome or lonely in rented accommodation, Irish migrants carved social spaces from commercial venues, particularly pubs and dance halls. Within these they created a comfortable, semi-private ethnic environment, a world that existed alongside but distinct from the host society and other ethnic groups. Seán Sorohan, in a recent book that employs oral testimony, writes, 'there was a significant amount of social interaction between Irish people in London, partly through residential and occupational distribution, but primarily through a raft of generally non-political organizations, clubs and places that became consciously "Irish spaces", which maintained and passed on an ethnic identity.'[105] These 'Irish spaces' helped migrants to acclimatize because, though physically in Britain, they felt closer to Ireland. Many regularly featured Irish music, making it a key part of the soundscape migrants' experienced and underscoring the cultural dimension of their ethnicity. Reg Hall's comprehensive work on the Irish music scene in London between 1890 and 1970 laid important groundwork for my research, but despite his use of interview sources, only rarely are migrants' voices heard.[106] While he focused on geographical and chronological developments, oral histories can also shed light on perceptions, feelings, and subjective identities. This section uses migrants' own words to argue that these 'Irish spaces', particularly venues featuring music and dancing, reflected and contributed to the development of their senses of community and identity.

As with migrants in America discussed in the previous chapter, the experience of living 'across the water' meant that markers of Irish culture once taken for granted acquired added weight. One man expressed this newfound regard saying, 'the thing that kept me going was the Irishness. You know, the music and you mixed with Irish people… You went to Irish pubs, anything with an Irish connection. You listened to the results from Ireland, listened to the Irish music because that was part of your life and you felt safe then in your own environment.'[107] This 'environment' often involved transfer of attitudes from Ireland and traditional music, associated with the rural poor, continued to carry that image.[108] Martin McMahon recalls,

> When we were young you were treated very very low, you were a very very low individual playing traditional music. To the Irish. Even when we went

[105] Sorohan, *Irish London during the Troubles*, p.17.
[106] Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London'.
[107] Raymond, quoted in O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity', p.161.
[108] Goek, '"I Never Would Return Again to Plough the Rocks of Bawn"', p.167.

> to England they were all laughing at us, 'what are you playing that rubbish for?' And I suppose the Chieftains opened that up… How would you describe it? They put a so-called 'respectability' on it. As if it weren't. We were respectable anyway. But you were looked down on. The Irish, they all wanted, no disrespect to Elvis Presley, I like him, but that's not a great reason for turning down your own culture either… It doesn't justify actually laughing, degrading your own music because you don't understand it or because you want to be somebody else that you're never going to be anyway. You can only be but yourself.

Martin implies that migrants who turned their noses up at Irish culture tried 'to be somebody else', an impossible endeavour because 'you can only be but yourself'. He believes traditional music has an inherent link to national identity and he rejects the underlying class attitudes masked by the term 'respectability'.[109] Elsewhere in the interview he commented, 'there was an awful lot of places we couldn't play trad in London, for all the Irish that was in it.' Among the Irish in Britain the format and selection of musical cultures varied, but whether scorned by upwardly mobile migrants who wanted to leave their roots behind or relied upon by labourers to alleviate homesickness, it reflected their interpretations of ethnic identity.

Recollections of first encounters with the Irish music scene in London stand out in musicians' narratives. John Bowe had first visited London in 1962 and arrived to stay in 1965:

> When I came over here, the first night I went into the White Hart the first thing I noticed was all the different Irish accents and they were from all different parts of Ireland… And there was so much music there, apart from the lads on the stage, there was so much musicians all come in and they're all just chatting there and I'm thinking in Ireland you'd have to wait, this might happen once a year or at some big event or something, but it was there and it was ready.

John comments on the novelty of the fact that in London musical gatherings happened every night of the week among a diverse group of people. Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin also recalls the vibrant atmosphere and sense of camaraderie:

> The cream of Ireland was in London that time playing music. They had to do the same thing we all done, pack the suitcase and go. There was better music in London that time than there was in Ireland because there was work there, there was music there and they associated together good and you met people from the whole of the country. We'd all left the same conditions and there's no point in being shy telling you that.

His use of the phrase 'the cream of Ireland' is reminiscent of the idea of 'the best are leaving' present in discourses of Irish emigration. 'The best' or 'the cream' could

[109] Cronin, 'Class and Status in Twentieth-Century Ireland', p.36.

mean those with the most initiative or characteristics of the 'true Gael'.[110] In highlighting the energy of the Irish scene in London, John and Jimmy draw attention to what Ireland lacked. Britain hosted a wealth of musical cultures and the Irish existed at the nexus of a few of them: the traditional country-house music learned in Ireland, popular culture (signified above by Elvis Presley), Irish interpretations of popular culture (showbands recycling contemporary hits), the folk revival, and the revivalist organizations Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Gaelic League. Individual musicians participated at different levels in these areas and together they forged new 'Irish spaces' on the British urban landscape.

Dance Halls

In the first decades of the twentieth century dance halls had become established as commercial social venues in Ireland, the United States, and Great Britain, furthered by the introduction of the radio, records, and jazz. Martin Pugh writes that 'the arrival of American troops in Britain in 1917 bringing jazz and ragtime bands' and new types of popular dances stimulated the dancing craze, a pattern re-established during the Second World War.[111] Public demand eventually overcame the initial onslaught of moral critics and 'along with the pub and the cinema dancing formed the basis of mass entertainment between the wars'.[112] This continued after 1945, when dancing was the second most popular form of entertainment (after the cinema), with 200 million people attending annually, more than twice the number who went to football matches or the theatre.[113] As in America, a number of dance halls in British urban centres catered specifically to Irish migrants through their proprietorship, locations, and music. At least twenty may have existed in London at any one time in the post-war era (more than twice as many as in Boston, New York, or Chicago).[114] The Irish thus adapted an urban space and a facet of popular entertainment to serve their own needs.

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[110] Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, pp.43-4.
[111] Pugh, *'We Danced All Night'*, p.219; Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival, 1944-2002* (Ashgate, 2003), ch.2.
[112] Pugh, *'We Danced All Night'*, p.220.
[113] Hideo Ichihashi, 'Working-Class Leisure in English Towns 1945 to 1960, with Special Reference to Coventry and Bolton' (Ph.D. diss., University of Warwick, 1994), p.23. He cites an article in *The Economist* from 14 Feb. 1953.
[114] Kevin McDermott names 28 and Reg Hall names 44, but in some cases the same venue changed name or ownership and in others owners/managers moved their hall from one location to another. McDermott, 'London's Irish Dance Halls', *Ireland's Own* (n.d., copy provided to the author); Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', pp.536-8.

Before and during the Second World War these venues generally featured 'hybrid' groups; a combination of the brass, saxophones, and drums of a standard dance band, plus one or two musicians who could play Irish tunes while the rest read from sheet music.[115] A few dance halls established in London before the war remained open after it and continued to use this model. However, the influx of new migrants from rural Ireland, with musicians, singers, and dancers among them, brought associated attitudes and preferences, gradually changing prevailing practices. The early 1950s witnessed the separation of musical performance into 'modern' and 'céilí' genres. The latter combined facets of Irish rural music making with the Gaelic Revival dances developed to accommodate large groups of people.[116] In the early post-war period 'it became the practice for modern, conventional dance-band musicians to be employed solely to play for ballroom dancing, and for the music for Irish dances… to be provided by an Irish-born button accordion player' or small group of musicians from a rural backgrounds.[117] Two migrants who spent time in London in the early 1950s fell on the latter side of the divide:

> KEVIN HENRY: In London I played in a place called The Buffalo for a short while – half and half, half Irish and half modern, if you know what I mean. You played for the Siege of Ennis, an old-time waltz, and a schottische and that was about the main ones, then you had to come down and let the other fellow off, but he had a longer stay than you had.[118]
>
> EAMON FLYNN: Everybody had a slot, see. You had the modern dance band and then you had an Irish musician or two playing the Irish music, like the Siege of Ennis, a barndance, and then you'd come off and the orchestra would play. It was very hard to get in. The only way you got playing is if somebody got sick, you'd fill in for them. But it would take you years and I was only there a short time, six or eight months. I remember sitting in with Roger Sherlock and all these guys and I was only the young lad! I remember there'd be Seamus Ennis and Willie Clancy, 'let the kid play a tune!' An old kid now!

Both hint at the fact that traditional musicians spent only a short time on stage, which limited their performance opportunities. They also mention the fusion of musical

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[115] Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', p.329, p.333. Julia Clifford describes playing in this type of group: 'My Life and Music', *Sliabh Luachra: Journal of Cumann Luachra*, vol.1, no.4 (June 1987), p.22; Julia Clifford, interview with Reg Hall, 17 Jan. 1990, RH BL.

[116] The Gaelic League coined the term 'céilí' for a social evening in London in 1897 and it came to apply to figure dances for large groups that are somewhat stricter in format than the set dances common in rural Ireland. However, Irish migrants in post-war Britain used the term 'céilí' liberally to apply to any traditional music. Cullinane, 'Irish Dance World-Wide', p.197.

[117] Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London,' p.334.

[118] It is unclear exactly when Kevin was in London because he moved around quite a lot, but he was in Britain from 1947 to 1953.

styles, as the Gaelic League would have frowned on the inclusion of waltzes or barndances, though they were common in rural Ireland.

As more Irish migrants arrived, entrepreneurs established new venues to cater for them. John Byrnes opened the most famous of these, the Galtymore in Cricklewood, in 1952 and shortly after he established the Hibernian in Fulham Road, making him one of the city's leading dance hall owners.[119] His halls had a single entry fee for two separate dance floors, one 'modern' and one 'céilí', rather than alternating the two styles on the same stage. In the 'modern' hall showbands played covers of hit songs and popular Irish singers such as Bridie Gallagher and Delia Murphy employed more sentimental fare. Nothing too modern though: it prominently displayed a sign reading 'jiving strictly prohibited'![120] This illustrates tensions between international popular culture and Irishness, with the Galtymore seeking to promote a 'respectable' and moral image, evident in the selection of music as well as the dress of the musicians and patrons. The other side had a resident céilí band, which included Galway flute player Martin Treacy:

> I got into the Galtymore and I spent eight years there… That was a massive place. There was two halls under the one roof. You had the showbands on one side and the céilí on the other side. You paid your money and you could cross back and forth. He made a fortune that man. The record there was there was 6,000 people got in there one night. It was that big. There'd be a queue way down the road.[121]

The options served to keep everyone happy and Packie Browne recalls that his wife, who disliked Irish music, settled in with her friends on the modern side and 'I'd amble over to the céilí side and I'd listen to the céilí music then for a half an hour! Then I'd come back and have a dance and go back over again!' He highlights dancing's place as an everyday form of recreation and the popularity of the Galtymore, saying, 'I went to the Galtymore on Saturday nights. I done the usual things that most Irish people do.'

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[119] Reg Hall says that the Galtymore opened in 1957, but newspaper articles at the time of its closure reported it opened in 1952. Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', p.331; Ronan McGreevy, 'End of an Era for Irish in London as Iconic Galtymore Dance Hall to Close Its Doors', *Irish Times*, 28 April 2008.

[120] The sign is visible in a photograph by Paddy Fahey used in the documentary *Damhsa an Deoraí [The Immigrant Dance]*, directed by Bob Quinn (Gael Media/TG4, Ireland, 2002). Kevin McDermott writes, 'in many of the Irish halls in the fifties, jiving or jitterbugging was not allowed and there were notices to that effect stuck on the walls. Rock and Roll was gaining popularity at the time but many of the Irish halls stuck to the "no jiving rules" with a certain amount of rigidity.' In 'London's Irish Dance Halls', *Ireland's Own* (n.d., copy provided to the author).

[121] The record attendance was 6,850 people in 1967 to see Larry Cunningham and his showband *The Mighty Avons*. Ronan McGreevy, 'End of an era for Irish in London as iconic Galtymore to close its doors', *Irish Times*, 28 April 2008.

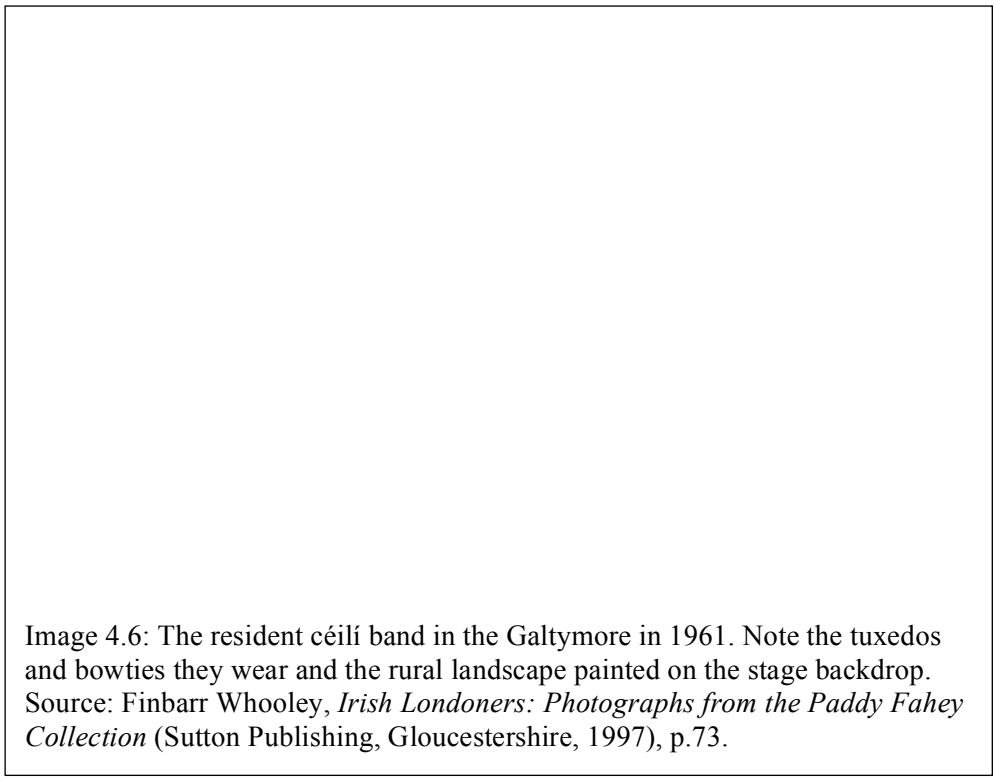


Image 4.6: The resident céilí band in the Galtymore in 1961. Note the tuxedos and bowties they wear and the rural landscape painted on the stage backdrop. Source: Finbarr Whooley, *Irish Londoners: Photographs from the Paddy Fahey Collection* (Sutton Publishing, Gloucestershire, 1997), p.73.

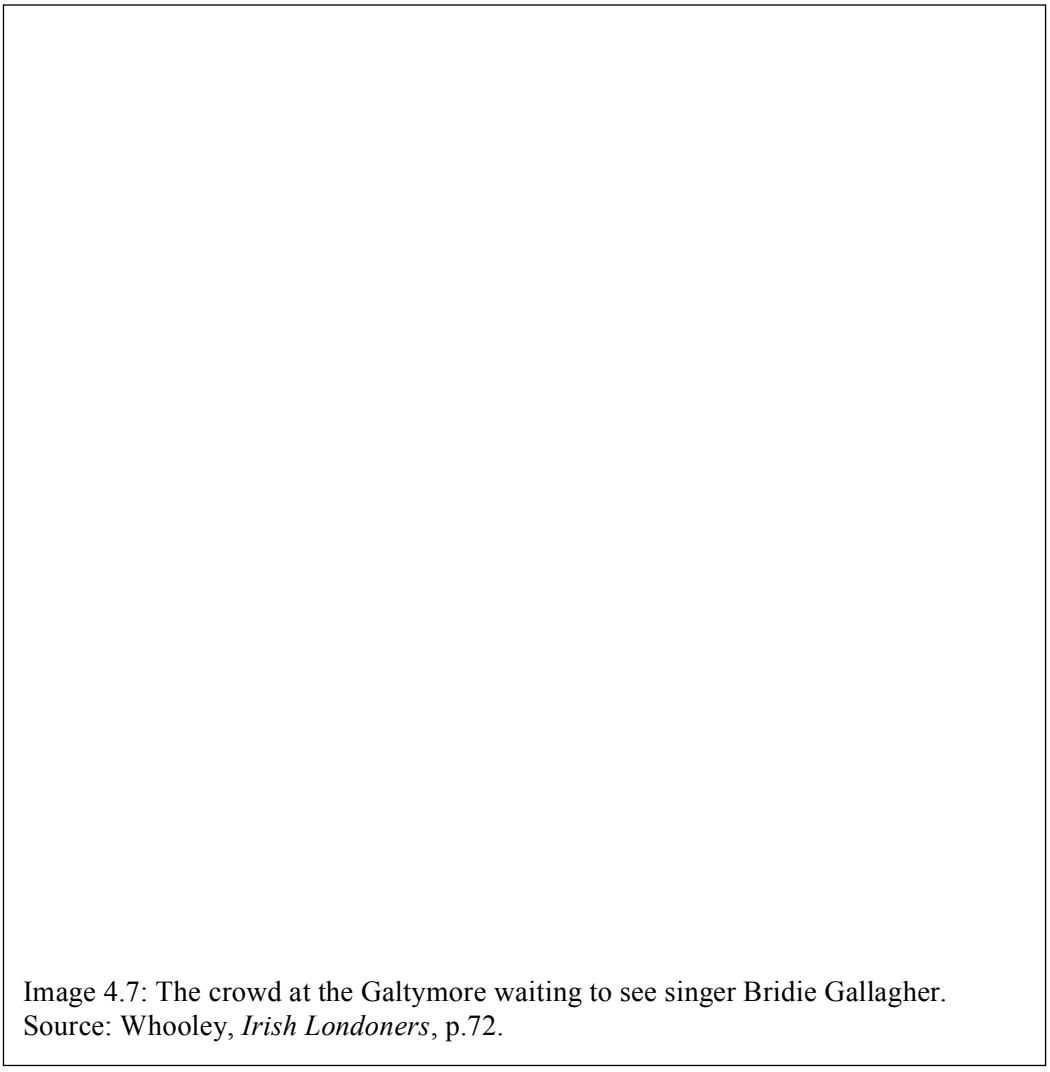


Image 4.7: The crowd at the Galtymore waiting to see singer Bridie Gallagher. Source: Whooley, *Irish Londoners*, p.72.

While catering to different tastes under the unifying banner of ethnicity, this setup also reflected divisions within the Irish population. Reg Hall observes:

> One [side] was céilí, which obviously was a Gaelic League repertory but it was West of Ireland-ized… So there would be the dance hall, which would be the céilí dance hall, and of course as more West of Ireland fellows came over and girls came over, it became much more the old rural way of dancing. In the other hall was the modern dancing where you'd do the quickstep, foxtrot, perhaps even the tango or the samba or something like that… These divisions.

The 'West of Ireland fellows' faced the intra-ethnic stereotype of 'being a bit "culchie", a bit uncouth', of a lower social strata, and as one woman said, 'we may have been totally wrong, but we were looking for something a little bit more refined'.[122] The Galtymore, by virtue of its commercial focus, size, and popularity, could accommodate 'these divisions' under one roof. In other circumstances, differences between venues mirrored the same divide. Tomás Ó Canainn arrived in Liverpool in 1955 to begin a Ph.D. He had a strong interest in the Irish language and traditional music and recalls:

> I can remember when I went to Liverpool the first time I was trying to find out where there were Irish things available, particularly music, and I remember talking to our local priest in the church I was going to, Christ the King Church in Liverpool, and he was from Cork, a place that I knew nothing about at that time, but his name was Father O'Callaghan. I always remember his advice, he was very respectable, he said 'yes, they're down there in St. Mary's, Highfield Street, but don't go near them, they're a very rough crowd,' sort of typical Irish lower classes. So that convinced me that that's where I wanted to go when he told me! That's when I went down and discovered the céilís there on a Sunday night and discovered the music. Even though he was warning me off it, he was the man that directed me to it.

The 'very respectable' priest represented a higher social stratum than the 'rough crowd' of 'typical Irish lower classes' who played or danced to traditional music. Fr. O'Callaghan clearly thought a young man pursuing a Ph.D. did not belong among the latter and likely regretted the effect of his remarks. This example suggests some Irish professionals avoided mixing with their working-class compatriots. Certain Irish venues, such as the local Catholic parish, drew migrants from all occupations and backgrounds who could thereby share in an ethnic identity. However, in other cases, where they went or which side of the wall they danced on illustrates the persistent class distinctions in interpretations of that identity.

[122] Phyllis Izzard, in Dunne, *An Unconsidered People*, pp.37-8.

Social class constitutes one point of divergence within the understanding of and participation in ethnic identity; gender is another. While pubs (discussed below) played a central role in men's processes of acculturation, women comment on the significance of dancing. Anna May Mangan writes of her family in the 1950s,

> One thing they imported from Ireland to London was their love of dancing. 'When we weren't working or asleep we were dancing!' Auntie Peggy told me. Dancing was their second religion… They always made time for dancing. My mum said she was step-dancing even when she was nine months pregnant with my brother, her eldest child. First stop in London was the dance hall, and fresh-faced and in some cases still swaying from the ferry crossing, Mum and Dad's brothers and sisters would blend for afternoon tea and evening dances. These were the highlights of their social scene.[123]

Women speak of the excitement and fun they had and the variety of venues available to choose from all days of the week, often a sharp contrast to their social lives in Ireland:

> On Fridays and Saturdays we'd go dancing to the Galtymore or the Garryowen in Hammersmith, or the Hammersmith Palais. Sometimes we'd go to The Forum in Camden Town. There were a lot of Irish dancehalls here in the fifties. On Sunday afternoons we used to go to the tea-dancing in the Banba club… I remember dressing up for those nights out. Taffeta was in then – red and black taffeta skirts with gold at the bottom. I'd wear a nice top – maybe white, but something nice, something dressy. We used to do a lot of jiving, so we'd wear flat sandals – the ones with the straps up your legs. We'd get very excited dressing up, and, of course, we'd walk everywhere. We were saving our money, so we couldn't afford to go by bus. I learned to jive here, when I first came over. I used to go to Percy Road, and they used to have very good dancers there. There was one particular fellow who'd teach us how to jive, and then we went to jiving lessons in Cricklewood Broadway. And we also took ballroom-dancing lessons. Our whole social life revolved around dancing.[124]

They saved money from their wages to go dancing at the weekends, making cuts in other areas by avoiding public transport or sharing clothes with friends.[125] Kiely and Leane write that 'women's enjoyment of going dancing was closely associated with the rituals of dressing up', though this can be read critically as reinforcing discourses that 'emphasized the social expectation that women should look well'.[126] However, as the above photograph of crowds in the Galtymore indicates, men also made an effort to dress well for dances. In British urban centres, away from the watchful eyes

[123] Mangan, *Me and Mine*, pp.27-8.
[124] Kathleen Morrissey, in Dunne, *An Unconsidered People*, pp.79-80.
[125] Mary Anne Murray, 'Irish Dance Halls' Dec. 2004, Reminiscences Collection, AIB LMU; Margaret O'Toole & Eileen Hanley, Bernie O'Callaghan Collection, Reminiscences Collection, AIB LMU.
[126] Kiely & Leane, *Irish Women at Work*, p.131.

of parents or parish priests, the widespread adoption of this form of leisure highlights ways women positively experienced 'greater economic independence and personal freedom' compared to Ireland.[127]

Dance halls provided not only an acceptable public space for women to spend their leisure hours, but also a place where they might meet potential boyfriends or spouses and begin courtship.[128] 'All my dad's sisters met their husbands in London dance halls,' writes Anna May Mangan, 'it all sounded so innocent, but céilí dancing was actually a form of frantic foreplay. There should have been a dance called Shake Those Childbearing Hips or the Husband Hop, because that was what the dances were all about. Boy Meets Girl.'[129] Early in the evening women dominated the dance floors, often partnering with each other, while men took a pint of courage in a nearby pub or remained shyly near the door.[130] Negotiating the geography of the dance floor could intimidate them:

> The men stood along one side of the hall, the girls on the opposite side. When the music started up, the men had to come across the floor and ask the girl of his choice to dance with him, 'Will you dance please' was the usual request, and the couple danced until the music stopped and then thanked each other. It was the men who had to request all dances.[131]

Occasionally there was a 'ladies choice' dance in the evening, but pressure largely fell on the men, contributing to their tendency to have a drink first (dance halls did not serve alcohol until the mid-1960s).[132] Men recognized and regretted this, though some felt unable to overcome proscribed gender roles. As one construction worker said, 'I needed the alcohol to be able to ask a woman to dance… I wasn't socially able to make any of these moves towards a normal life.'[133] If they could work up the nerve and the couple hit it off, the courtship rituals that followed generally involved trips to the cinema or dances together at least once a week.[134]

The social networks of friendship, kinship, and employment that sustained the Irish community developed around these venues and they played an important, if inadvertent role, in sustaining ethnic culture. Kevin Burke reflects,

> A lot of the dances were, there was great music and great dancing, but it wasn't couched in terms of culture, it was a commercial venture – some

[127] Sheridan, 'More than One Story to Tell', p.96.
[128] Pugh, *'We Danced All Night'*, pp.220, 231.
[129] Mangan, *Me and Mine*, pp.122, 117.
[130] Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', p.331
[131] Mary Anne Murray, 'Irish Dance Halls' Dec. 2004, Reminiscences Collection, AIB LMU.
[132] Phyllis Izzard in Dunne, *An Unconsidered People*, p.36.
[133] J. McGarry, quoted in Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.214.
[134] Ó Ciaráin, *Farewell to Mayo*, p.128.

> Irish guy opened a dance hall, put Irish bands in there, attracted an Irish audience, and they were just by definition fostering Irish music and culture. But that wasn't their intention. They wanted to make some money and this was the best way they knew of how to do it – open a dance hall, get some Irish music in there and it'll attract a bunch of Irish people and they'll pay to get in and I'll make some money. And of course, like anywhere else, the better the music you have or the better set up you have, the more people want to come, so the more people come and the more money made. So a lot of the places that had a great effect in that line of fostering Irish culture didn't have that as their intention. But it happened anyway, I think.

Dance halls catered for entertainment and leisure, but among the Irish they filled a multitude of additional roles, aiding adjustment to life in Britain as places to meet friends from home, develop new contacts, and find romantic partners.[135] As one woman recalled, 'Dance Halls [sic] were the main way of meeting people, and most Irish people met their future husband or wife there, and made many friends too.'[136] Their owners did not necessarily set out with this purpose in mind, but in the context of large-scale post-war migration they found themselves running venues that fostered culture and community.

Pubs

As discussed above, inhospitable accommodation often left men with few alternatives after work other than the pub. An English observer remarked, 'a number of the Irish use the pub habitually because they have nowhere else to go and in reality it is force of circumstances which drives them to the pub'.[137] Irishmen themselves understood the pros and cons of this situation: 'When you come over here you have no home, you pay for your week's lodgin's [sic], get a bed, your meals maybe, but at night you're not wanted there, you don't fit in, your culture is different, you go out at night and spend your money in the pub because there's nowhere else much to go to, because there's camaraderie there, and there's people, it's a social kind of a life.'[138] They found not only a place to escape their lodgings, but an environment where, surrounded by familiar faces and accents, they could relax.[139] The prevalence of pubs in Ireland also made them a comfortable space, though for working-class men from rural backgrounds, lack of disposable income in

[135] Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, pp.170-1.
[136] Mary Anne Murray, 'Irish Dance Halls' Dec. 2004, Reminiscences Collection, AIB LMU.
[137] This writer is condescending towards the Irish generally, especially in his rendering of their accents and remarks about their drinking habits, but he makes some astute observations. TC85 Drinking Habits 1939-63, Box 7 Pub Observations 1947-48, 85-7F Dagenham, Essex, MOA.
[138] T. Durkin, quoted in Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.150.
[139] Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain since World War II', p.56; Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, pp.173-4.

Ireland meant that pubs had less importance for their everyday social lives prior to migration.[140]

Seeing an opportunity, Irish publicans in Britain tailored their business to the clientele, often taking on practical functions besides serving drinks: they cashed wage cheques for men paid on 'the lump'; they received and sent mail; and they served food. The dependence on pubs to cash wage cheques in some cases led to exploitation of the workers by the publicans, who might charge to cash a cheque, refuse to hand over wages until the end of the evening, or keep a 'slate' of all food and drinks purchased. Nonetheless, like dance halls, pubs acted as informal community centres: you could find someone who could get you a job or a place to live and you could meet others from 'home'.[141] Martin McMahon says, 'everything used to happen in the pub. Everybody went to the pub.' His wife Teresa adds, 'all business was done in the pub. That was the office, really. You got a job. Or if I met you and you said, "I don't have a room or a place to live" I'd say "I know so-and-so" and so-on and that's how it went really.' The transient nature of many Irishmen's working lives contributed to the pub's importance because, unlike a formal association or social club, it required no commitment from those hesitant to put down roots.[142] For the large numbers who stayed within an urban centre, the earlier generations of Irish migrants were relatively small compared to the influx that entered after the war and existing institutions found themselves unable to cope. Gradually the Catholic Church intervened to help the new migrants and local Irish centres developed, but in the interim informal institutions such as pubs filled the void and established themselves as integral features of Irish life in Britain.[143]

Once a predominantly male domain, by the mid-1950s pubs had opened their doors to women, but they and the Irishness developed in them feature more prominently in men's experiences. Irish women were more likely to have

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[140] Malcolm, 'The Rise of the Pub', pp.50-77. Pubs in Ireland were a predominantly male domain and for most drinking in them took place primarily for special occasions, rather than on a day-to-day basis.

[141] Leavey, Sembhi & Livingstone, 'Older Irish Migrants Living in London', p.775.

[142] O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity', p.196.

[143] The Catholic Church was primarily concerned that Irish men and women not lose their faith in Britain, but while looking after their spiritual needs also did much to assist with their material welfare. It played an integral role in setting up the London Irish Centre in Camden (premises purchased in 1955). The Catholic Housing Aid Society began in 1956, the Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy Scheme in 1957 and the Marian Employment Agency in 1963. Gerry Harrison, *The Scattering: A History of the London Irish Centre, 1954-2004* (London Irish Centre, London, 2004); O'Shea, *The Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy Scheme*.

employment that provided live-in accommodation, such as in the hospitality and healthcare sectors, to integrate smoothly within the workforce and host society, and to exhibit a desire for upward social mobility.[144] Sarah O'Brien quotes one interviewee who demonstrated a middle-class consciousness, emphasizing that she would avoid certain venues: 'you wouldn't go to a pub in Camden Town. There was the crowd that kept themselves in Camden Town and then there was one in Tottenham Court Road, an Irish dance hall, I never went there.'[145] Martin McMahon suggests that the relatively few women in Irish pubs contributed to their roughness and this perception may have fed back into the reasons that some women stayed away.[146]

Irishmen's reliance on pubs for socialization, combined with difficult working lives and poor housing, could produce negative side effects, including a rough lifestyle, competitive rivalries, and an overdependence on alcohol. Mick Treacy and his wife Maura tease out the possible factors in the case of one place:

> MICK: There was the Crown in Cricklewood and that was tough. That was rough. That's another aspect of it. When you'd go down that way you'd go into the Crown alright but it was never a pub that I liked to stay in it because there was always kind of an atmosphere, explosive, that it could happen any minute.
>
> MAURA: I think there's a lot of frustration… They didn't want to be there.
>
> MICK: They hated being there.
>
> MAURA: They hated being there. There was nothing at home. Anyone who got married was lucky I suppose.
>
> MICK: They had some sort of an anchor. But there was a lot of young men, well young-ish kind of men, and they didn't want to be there and they didn't fit in there.
>
> MAURA: And they didn't communicate very well.

Not everyone showed this level of empathy and Kevin O'Connor negatively labels Irish socializing in pubs 'alcoholic nostalgia'.[147] Alcohol may have temporarily alleviated some symptoms of dislocation, but unable to communicate well and

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[144] O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity', pp.152-3.
[145] Sarah O'Brien, 'Narrative Encounters with the Irish in Birmingham', in N. Cronin, S. Crosson & J. Eastlake (eds.), *Anáil an Bhéil Bheo: Orality and Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), p.162.
[146] Martin says, 'the pubs were rough in the '50s. I'll tell you why they were rough – there wasn't any women using pubs… It was all men drinkers and men have rows amongst each other… Tables and chairs might fly for a while and all that business, but once the women started to use the pubs, all that died out and pubs became very respectable places to be.'
[147] O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain*, p.108.

frustrated with their circumstances, it fuelled other problems. Kevin McDermott, who worked as a London fireman, recalls fights in the street after closing time:

> I was in a fire station in Holloway and it backed onto a big Irish pub… At about eleven o'clock on a Saturday those fireman used to, they were watching the telly, but they used to go out and stand on the balcony and watch the Irish beat themselves out of the pub and round the front of the fire station and sort it out on the forecourt of the station. That was their entertainment. It was, really it was awful.

In saying 'it was awful' Kevin and others who understood the conditions that created these outpourings of frustration expressed regret at both their cause and effect. Public fights contributed to the persistence of negative stereotypes of the Irish that dated to the nineteenth century, while also reinforcing the class and geographical divisions carried over from Ireland.[148]

In the context of this research, the most significant post-war modification of pub culture was allowing musicians to play on the premises. Pre-1960s rural Ireland offered little precedent for this and even in London in the 1940s most pubs did not want music. Fiddler Jimmy Power said, 'in them days, you'd be hit over the head with a bottle if you tried to play a tune in a pub'.[149] Reg Hall found that the first regular 'session', or informal gathering of musicians, in London took place at the Devonshire Arms in Camden Town in 1948 and centred on a group of musicians from the Tobercurry area of County Sligo, a local social network transferred from one country to another.[150] Music started in the Black Cap in the centre of Camden Town shortly thereafter, a symbol of its move from the margins to the heart of migrant life. The typical pub session as it developed had many of the features of a country-house dance, with the exception that it shifted the purpose of music from dancing to listening.[151] Unable to play music in their homes, musicians created a semi-private space within a public one and in doing so they hit upon a model hugely popular with pub patrons. Martin Niland recalls, 'they just loved the music. It was hard to keep them out of the pub once the music they wanted to listen to was there.'

Publicans caught on to the fact that traditional music drew in crowds of Irish migrants and by the mid-1950s they commonly paid two or three musicians to host

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[148] Canavan, 'Story-Tellers and Writers', p.165.
[149] In Reg Hall, 'The Social Organisation of Traditional Music-Making: The Irish in London after the War', Ó Riada Memorial Lecture 10 (University College Cork, 1995), p.5 Jimmy Power was born in 1918 in Co. Waterford, migrated to Britain first in 1942, and settled in London in 1947.
[150] Ibid., pp.5-6; Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', pp.315-16.
[151] Hall, 'The Social Organisation of Traditional Music-Making', p.9; Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', pp.316-17.

regular weekly sessions. Other musicians could join in and more impromptu or informal gatherings of musicians continued to occur as well. The London pubs mentioned frequently in musicians' recollections include: The White Hart and The King's Head in Fulham, The Favourite in Holloway, The Crown in Cricklewood, The Eagle and the Bedford Arms in Camden Town, and the Balloon Tavern in Chelsea.[152] Billy Clifford says, 'you'd get loads of people, lots of people would call in once they'd find out there'd be music going on. You wouldn't have too many [musicians] in the circle… those days you'd probably have five or six in the group. That was typical of what was going on. That's where we met all these others fellows, other people from other counties playing.' Pub sessions proved popular with both musicians and audiences: the former relished the opportunity to practice their craft with others from all over Ireland, while the latter enjoyed hearing music that reminded them of home and socializing with other Irish people. Liam Farrell recalls, 'the pubs were always crowded and that and it was a great deadly atmosphere. Like the White Hart especially, it was amazing the atmosphere in there. It would just pick your heart up to go in there. Everyone that came in there loved the Irish music.' Martin McMahon says of the sessions he played with PJ Hynes, Roger Sherlock, and Sean Maguire that 'you would think it was the Rolling Stones. There'd be a quarter of a mile queue down the road on a Monday night to hear this music. It was pretty good now!'

The session in the Bedford Arms, run by Michael Gorman (fiddler from Sligo) and Margaret Barry (banjo player, singer, and Irish traveller), can be taken as representative of these events in the mid-1950s. Reg Hall attended and describes the scene:

> Working men from the West of Ireland, dressed uniformly in blue serge suits, white shirts, dark ties and polished shoes, stood drinking pints of bitter or half-pints of Guinness with their friends. Tough men at work they might have been, but in the pub they were commonly shy and self-effacing, polite to strangers and generous to a fault. Women were seldom to be seen, except on quieter nights during the week… The resident musicians… sat in the far corner of the small, shabby public bar, huddled on a tiny stage constructed of beer crates covered with lino… The music was acoustic, the army-surplus microphone relaying only the sound of the fiddle to a handful of customers into the private bar, and it was listened to and appreciated above a hubbub

[152] For an extensive list see Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', Appendix 24, 'Public Houses in London where Irish Music is Known to Have Been Played', pp.532-3.

> of conversation and laughter and the sounds of chinking glass and the cash register.[153]

From the perspective of an audience member in 1957, Dónall Mac Amhlaigh commented on what the setting and the music meant to the migrants:

> *Bhí ceol breá á casadh sa Bhedford - veidhlíní, cairdíní agus feadóga - agus níor fhág siad cor ná port nár sheinn siad. Bhí iontas ar Arthur, mar is cosúil nár shíl sé go mbíodh tada mar shin taobh amuigh d'Éirinn, ach tá dul amú air. Is Gaelaí go mór an baile seo ná bunáite na n-áiteanna sa bhaile. Is mó Gaeilge a labhraítear ann agus is minice ceol Gaelach á chasadh ann.*[154]

Mac Amhlaigh's enthusiasm emanates from the text. Perhaps he even saw the same musicians pictured in the photograph below (image 4.8).



Image 4.8: Musicians in The Bedford Arms, Camden Town, London, c.1957: Tommy Maguire (accordion, almost hidden), Michael Gorman (fiddle), Paddy Breen (whistle), Margaret Barry (banjo), James Quinn (uilleann pipes) & Tony Martin (fiddle). Source: Courtesy of the Irish Traditional Music Archive.

Musicians recognized the interest and engagement of their audiences and Danny Meehan recalls,

> Oh they were great, they were fantastic. You were like a prince. Even if you didn't play all that well, the fact that you went up and played anyway you were still [welcomed] because there weren't that many playing at the time. The music grew and grew there. There was a fantastic atmosphere, a great atmosphere. Sunday morning people had the day off and didn't have to go to work, they came down and had a couple of pints. 'Twas a great atmosphere.

[153] Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', p.320.

[154] 'We had great music at the Bedford - fiddles, concertinas and tin whistles - and there was hardly a jig or reel that they didn't play. Arthur was astonished, for he never dreamed that anything like this went on outside Ireland; but he's wrong. This town is, in many ways, more Irish than a lot of the places at home. More Irish is spoken here and much more Irish music is played here.' Mac Amhlaigh, *Dialann Deoraí*, p.109; Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navvy*, p.112. Translation edited by S. Goek.

Vince Milne says Irish pubs in London in the early 1970s had 'huge audiences' and comments that perhaps both the background of the migrants he encountered and the fact that they lived outside Ireland contributed to their love for the music:

> What surprised me was that compared to Ireland… across in England the people, the Irish people who had emigrated even years before that, they had a much greater understanding and a *grá* for the music than we had here… Maybe the fact that they were away from home maybe, I don't know. But they seemed to be really immersed in it.

This made a difference, because as John Bowe says they were 'fantastic listeners' and 'I think that made us all play'. He adds, 'they understood what you were playing and they were very interested in it' and Liam Farrell agrees, saying, 'they would give you great support'. The sense of atmosphere that emerges from these accounts is one of conviviality. Audience members always kept an ear on the music, occasionally shouted encouragement, and maintained respectful silence for singers.[155]

One pub with a regular session offers a case study of the way these events developed over time and their role in the community. Tom and Kathleen McManamon took over management of The Favourite on Benwell Road, Holloway, North London in 1966 and sessions began there in September headed by Waterford-born fiddler Jimmy Power. Reg Hall accompanied him on piano and he recalls how quickly word got around despite a lack of direct advertising: 'The first Sunday there were six people there and there weren't more than six people in the bar and the bar was about ten times the size of this room, never more than six people in there. The next week twelve, the next week packed. Word got around and we were there fourteen years.' Rather than a large group of musicians all playing together at the same time, as commonly seen today, Jimmy Power acted as MC, asking musicians among the patrons to play a tune individually or in small groups. As the Sunday session gained popularity, music started there other nights of the week as well. Kevin McDermott played a mixture of traditional and modern music on Saturday evenings, and met the woman who would become his wife working behind the bar. He describes the setting: 'Funny enough it was quite a modern pub as old London pubs go… The typical London pub in those days would've had a piano and there'd be a

[155] Sean-nós singer Joe Heaney said, 'if you sang a good song in a bar in Camden Town you'd get silence, that time, because the people who came, although they were drinking they came for the love of the music too. I used to see people throwing down their darts while somebody was singing, even an Irish song that would always go down well, you know. They'd put down their darts 'til the song was over… "The Rocks of Bawn" was their favourite and "*Curachaí na Trá Báine*" was a favourite of the fellows from Connemara, you know.' Interview with Mick Moloney, 4 Dec. 1981. Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

sing-song. They had a bit of a stage. You came in the door and you walked up to the stage, the bar was on the right I remember.'[156] It also had a back room and Reg recalls that during the Sunday sessions, 'all the shy musicians would, Danny Meehan would go in there and Johnny Duffy would go there and they'd be playing another session and we'd have to go and drag them out to come in. But that was the underground music. If The Favourite was the underground culture then the other bar was the underground to us and I was always being told of all the wonderful things that went on in the other bar.'

As news spread it gained notoriety and the crowds grew. Sean O'Shea recalls, 'The Favourite was a great meeting place for musicians and good listeners and they could overflow out onto the street' and occasionally someone would dance a hornpipe on the pavement. It came to the notice of Bill Leader of Topic Records, a London-based company with left-wing political leanings.[157] He attended the sessions on a number of occasions and, with the assistance of Reg Hall, made recordings that developed into the album *Paddy in the Smoke: Irish Dance Music from a London Pub*, released in 1968.[158] It features some of the best of London's Irish musicians at the time and captures the unique atmosphere. The opening track begins with a drawn out, quavering note from Galway-born fiddler Mairtín Byrnes as he launches into a reel and about twenty seconds in someone shouts 'go on Byrnes!' A faint buzz of chatter is audible in the background and the performances are spontaneous and electric. Reg Hall featured on the album as a piano accompanist and wrote, in the liner notes for its re-release nearly three decades later,

> Dance music blossomed in Ireland several generations back in the noisy bustle and excitement of dancing in country cottages. At times that same excitement was generated in London pubs, where musicians from that rural background played to their work mates and neighbours a long way from home. *Paddy in the Smoke* is a fleeting, privileged glimpse at some of the best Irish musicians of their time playing on their own terms in their own semi-private world.[159]

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[156] Kevin McDermott, interview with the author. Kevin also wrote a short article about the pub: 'A Favourite London Pub', *Ireland's Own*, 23 Feb. 2007.
[157] On Topic Records see: Michael Brocken, 'The British Folk Revival: An Analysis of Folk/Popular Dichotomies from a Popular Music Studies Perspective' (Ph.D. diss., University of Liverpool, 1997), pp.95-100.
[158] A few of the people interviewed for this study feature on the album: Reg Hall, Danny Meehan, and Sean O'Shea. All the others on the album (with the exception of Tony McMahon. who was only passing through) were immigrant musicians active in London in the post-war era. See also: O'Shea, *The Making of Irish Traditional Music*, p.42.
[159] Reg Hall, in *Paddy in the Smoke*.

While using recorded music as a historical source presents analytical challenges, listening to the album and combining it with spoken memories of the venue and the broader context of pubs and social life provides an auditory snapshot of the Irish migrant social milieu in post-war Britain.



Image 4.9: Steve O'Loughlin, Raymond Roland, Reg Hall (piano), and Mairtín Byrnes (fiddle) in The Favourite. Source: *Paddy in the Smoke*.

Kevin Burke grew up in London and recalls going to pubs to play music during the 1960s. He summarizes their multifaceted role within the community:

> I was going there as a young teenager so drinking alcohol wasn't really an attraction to me and meeting all these middle-aged Irish people wasn't really the attraction. I enjoyed that, but the main attraction for me was the music… But other people, the Irish people, the middle-aged Irish people, saw it slightly differently. They enjoyed the music and they went there; the music was definitely a draw, but accompanying that was a chance to meet their friends and neighbours and hang out and it was definitely a *community centre kind of atmosphere* as well. Exchange views or news from home, gossip from back in Ireland, you know, but also a lot of these people would be working together for a while and then one guy would leave and go to another job and then at the weekend he'd meet his buddies and they'd be talking about the new job versus the old job, 'oh yeah this is a lot better, maybe you should come with me, I could get you a start there maybe', so there was a lot of that going on. Of course a lot of the younger people, a lot of the single people would be looking to meet girls and boys, for the young attraction angle. That was definitely part of the attraction of going to these places – meeting members of the opposite sex. But mainly it was just a hang, *a place to hang, and great music alongside it*. And the music was usually very respected… There'd be lots of talking and people telling jokes

> and laughing, but at the same time they'd have one ear on the music all the time and they understood the music. When it was getting better they recognized it. And of course when the musicians felt it was getting better they recognized that the audience or the other people in the pub, they realized that the audience noticed it was getting better too and one side would encourage the other. It was great. Sometimes in some of the pubs dancing would break out, there'd be an impromptu set, a half set, which always livened the proceedings. *It was a little enclave of Irish culture in this surrounding sea of Englishness.* (Emphasis added)

Irish pubs in Britain evolved into informal community centres that promoted and maintained Irish culture in a 'surrounding sea of Englishness'. They gave the migrants a place to meet friends or potential partners, to escape poor living conditions, and to find new jobs, all in an environment that seemed less foreign than what existed beyond its walls. This could have downsides, because to a degree it did 'segregate and ghettoize Irish migrants' within their own social sphere and some grew dependent on the alcohol consumed while they socialized.[160] However, finding a place where they felt they 'belonged' constituted important 'stepping-stones to the larger society', extending the social repertoire of both musicians and their audiences.[161] As O'Brien writes, 'the role that pubs played in rejuvenating the migrant's Irish identity and expanding his (and, to a much lesser extent, her) social network should not be under-estimated. The escapism, light-heartedness and companionship provided by the pub were crucial in combating loneliness and the migrant who handled their alcohol intake with a degree of moderation, thrived in the pub environment.'[162] Unlike the associations discussed in the next section, in cultural terms dance halls had pubs had 'no latent purpose' of revivalism or preservation. For that very reason they reflect the centrality of Irish identity to migrants' everyday lives.[163]

Associations & Revivals

The venues and forms of music making discussed in the previous two sub-sections constitute the main forms of cultural practice the interviewees addressed. However, some mentioned alternative, formal situations where music overlapped with agendas of preservation or politics. The Gaelic League and its musical antecedent, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, though founded half a century apart, had

[160] O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity', p.224.
[161] Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.175; Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain since World War II', p.60.
[162] O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity', p.224.
[163] Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.174.

their roots in cultural nationalism and viewed the Irish language and music as entities necessitating preservation and revival.[164] This conservative ethos and static view of tradition distinguished them from the more organic and informal practices of the Irish rural farmhouse or British urban pub. While the Gaelic League existed in Britain in the post-war era, Reg Hall suggests it held little allure for the majority of recent migrants.[165] CCÉ, after the establishment of the first London branch in 1957, had more success in bridging the gap, but was still seen as a separate entity. Danny Meehan comments,

> I suppose Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann were good in one sense, but the music would have lived anyway, I think, without too much regulation or too much power, but they were a bit scared that it would have died away a bit. The people that I played with in London, Sara, in the '60s and '70s, they weren't necessarily great Comhaltas buffs, you know. Some of them didn't like it at all. They played because they just loved it, they grew up with it.[166]

He distinguishes the living tradition from the organisation's active revivalism, adding that 'you weren't aware that you were in anything, it was just a lot of fun and you played for fun'. A number of musicians participated in both the informal and formal aspects, though they seem to have done so either because Comhaltas offered yet another opportunity to socialize and play music, or because they had children learning to play or an interest in teaching the next generation.[167] The *fleadheanna*, festivals centred on competitions, also gave them an excuse to travel to meet musicians across Britain and at the All-Ireland each summer.[168] British-based céilí bands, composed largely of migrant musicians, proved successful in the competitions: the Liverpool Céilí Band won in 1963 and '64, the Glenside (London) in 1966, and the Thatch (London, image 4.10) in 1986 and '87.

Another formalized structure that a few migrant musicians participated in was the folk revival. While this 'did not operate as a cohesive group', individuals within it 'co-operated and mirrored each other in a number of ways, thus constituting

[164] Henry, 'Institutions for the Promotion of Indigenous Music', p.69.
[165] Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', p.283. Only one of my interviewees mentioned participating in the Gaelic League: Tomás Ó Canainn taught singing in Irish for the organisation in Manchester in the early 1950s. As he came from Northern Ireland, he may have seen the Gaelic League and language in a different light than the others.
[166] Kevin Burke expressed similar opinions (interview with the author, 12 May 2012).
[167] Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', pp.342-9.
[168] Roger Sherlock, interview with the author, 14 May 2011; Mick O'Connor, interview with the author, 3 July 2012.



Image 4.10: The Thatch Céilí Band with their All-Ireland trophy. Standing, left to right: Paul Gallagher (Donegal, flute), Roger Sherlock (Sligo, flute), Kevin Taylor (London Irish, piano), Whelan (drums), Brendan Mulkere (Clare, fiddle), Bobby Casey (Clare, fiddle). Seated, left to right: Tommy Keane (Waterford, uilleann pipes), John Bowe (Offaly, accordion), Mick O'Connor (London Irish, banjo), Adrian Bourke (fiddle). Photograph courtesy of John Bowe.

a loose-knit network' that extended beyond national borders.[169] Reg Hall took part in both the Irish pub scene and the folk clubs and says that, apart from a few select musicians, in the 1950s and '60s 'there was no crossover' in either direction.[170] Seannós singer Joe Heaney was one exception during his time in London (before he journeyed on to America and also became an exception there, as discussed in Chapter 3):

> I was there when the folk revival started… I eventually ended up resident Irish singer in the Singers' Club with Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger and Bert Lloyd, you know, and as far as I know I'm still the Irish resident singer, so she told me the last time I saw her. Then of course there wasn't any money to be made at that time with the clubs, you know.[171]

MacColl and Seeger recorded Heaney's songs and stories in 1964, later released as *The Road from Connemara*.[172] However, for revival activists who recorded Irish musicians and singers, 'the Irishness of the artists was incidental; authenticity as carriers of traditional material and as traditional performers was the over-riding criterion'.[173] Transcripts of MacColl and Seeger's conversations with Heaney make this apparent when they repeatedly ask him to comment on singers of other

[169] Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', p.356; J.P. Bean, *Singing from the Floor: A History of British Folk Clubs* (Faber & Faber, London, 2014), pp.xix-xx.
[170] Reg Hall, interview with the author, 3 July 2012.
[171] Joe Heaney, interview with Mick Moloney, 4 Dec. 1981. Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[172] Joe Heaney, *The Road from Connemara*, Topic Records, TSCD518D, 2000; Joe Heaney, Ewan MacColl & Peggy Seeger, 'Joe Heaney: Interview Transcription and Repertoire' (accessed Jan. 2014) <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/heaney.htm>.
[173] Reg Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London', p.362.

nationalities and whether they have an authentic quality.[174] While this suggests a certain left-wing internationalism, concomitantly MacColl and his colleagues also insisted on purification of the music along national lines (Singers' Club participants were restricted to songs from their own language and local tradition) and a rejection of American influences.[175] The structured nature of the folk clubs and their conservatism alienated a potential source of membership: young Irish migrants. Vince Milne comments, 'the folk club wasn't the scene for us that time, you know. We would've regarded the folk club scene with suspicion. The fact that it was run by people and that it was sort of organized and you had to sit down and be quiet, that wouldn't suit us at all. We had to go to the pub.'[176]

Apart from Heaney, another Irish singer who found a place on the folk club circuit was Luke Kelly. He migrated to England at age seventeen with an interest in jazz, but no knowledge of Irish music or folk music. That changed abruptly, as he told Ciarán Mac Mathúna in a 1963 interview:

> It was quite by accident actually. I was sitting in a pub in Newcastle-on-Tyne, it's a great singing area in Geordie land and I used to frequent jazz clubs and someone said, 'well the folk song club is starting tonight, I'm going along.' 'You know,' I said, 'can I come along with you?' And away I went. I was waiting to pay in and there was a crowd of English people, surprisingly enough, singing 'The Auld Triangle', you know. They were making the most wonderful sounds, singing the most wonderful harmonies, natural, extemporaneous and I felt it straight away and I haven't been in a jazz club since. I've been singing folk songs ever since.[177]

The left-leaning ethos of the revival also appealed to him and he said 'my interest in folk music grew parallel to my interest in politics.'[178] He learned songs from MacColl and he went on to renown as part of the ballad group The Dubliners. In that capacity he had a significant impact on Irish music, one that developed out of a baptism in the British folk revival.

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[174] Heaney, MacColl & Seeger, 'Joe Heaney: Interview Transcription and Repertoire'.
[175] Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*, ch.3; Brocken, 'The British Folk Revival', p.79, p.108; Bean, *Singing from the Floor*, pp.102-3.
[176] English singer and guitarist Wizz Jones also commented on the conservatism of folk clubs in the 1950s: 'In those early years you wouldn't be allowed in a folk club if you were scruffy, if you were a beatnik. I can remember going to clubs and being turned away.' And, 'Ewan [MacColl] was quite heavy in those days. I used to go to his folk club at the Princess Louise, what later became the Singers' Club. It was all very laying down the law… It was like a school thing, very biased towards the Communist Party, the Workers Revolutionary Party – that kind of people.' In: Bean, *Singing from the Floor*, pp.13-15.
[177] Luke Kelly, interview with Ciarán Mac Mathúna (RTÉ, 1963); Des Geraghty, *Luke Kelly: A Memoir* (Basement Press, Dublin, 1994), pp.43-4.
[178] 'Luke Kelly', *Irish Times*, 21 Dec. 1967.

While MacColl's club and others aligned with the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS)[179] operated with an overtly political and social message, the revival broadened beyond their control and many amateur-run clubs took a more relaxed approach. One participant and organizer was Mick Treacy from Mitchelstown, Co. Cork who, unlike many of his contemporaries, deliberately sought out non-Irish music and venues, including folk and jazz clubs. He enjoyed the 'mix of people', the songs, and the politics. On moving from London to Birmingham in 1963 he started The Holy Ground folk club in a pub called the Cambridge Inn, owned by a Wicklow man. The room they used held an audience of about a hundred people and he says of those, maybe twenty percent were Irish 'and the rest were Scots, Welsh, anything, you name it'. While the folk revival involved people of many nationalities and its development can be considered a transnational or international phenomenon, most shared a similar political outlook and Mick comments,

> They were a lot of them very political at the time, of the left mostly. I did, I met one or two who would've been considered fascists, but most of them were of the left, or some of them had no politics at all, just wanted to sing. They were very vocal about the fact that 'we have no agenda', but still they were good singers and they were bringing out, digging up rather than bringing out, some good songs.

Mick chose to leave behind his Fianna Fáil family roots and moved towards the left, beginning by surreptitiously purchasing the *Daily Worker* and eventually participating in the West Midlands branch of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, singing at fundraising functions.[180] Though he 'never joined the Communist Party' he met many of its members:

> I was good friends with all of them and they were nice people, they were lovely people, very dedicated an awful lot of them, too dedicated for me, but I was sceptical about a lot of things. But there was that strata in it as well and the YCL then, the Young Communist League, they were very kind of, well they were kind of go-ahead at the time and the older crowd, the members of the Party they used to be, you'd know them miles away because they never wore ties, they'd a plastic mac and a beret. You could nearly pick them out! …The old fellows, the older you got the more conservative you got, but I used laugh – plastic macs, see-through plastic macs, open shirt, because that was the symbol, and the beret then. But 'twas good, 'twas great to meet all those people.

[179] The Folk Song Society was founded in 1898 and the English Folk Dance Society in 1911. They merged into the English Folk Dance and Song Society in 1932. Reg Hall called the group as the folk revival 'mafia', referring not to any illicit practices, but to their conservative ethos and desire for control over the movement. Reg Hall, interview with the author, 3 July 2012.

[180] On the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament see: Celia Penelope Hughes, 'The Socio-Cultural Milieux of the Left in Post-War Britain' (Ph.D. diss., University of Warwick, 2011), pp.96-108.

Through his involvement in folk clubs and their political counterparts, Mick encountered a much broader range of people then perhaps most Irish migrants. He says, 'I didn't specifically go to Irish dances except now and again if I was to meet someone or sometimes we'd sing there and we'd be asked to do that, but I liked to meet everyone, you know.' His wife Maura offers a slightly different assessment: 'He was bloody awkward. You were the opposite way to everybody else – that was it!'[181]

Over the years the growing popularity of folk music and the 'ballad boom' brought new audiences into contact with Irish traditional music. They realized that 'the English folk scene had more or less died out and was brought back through folk clubs, but the Irish folk music was still alive as folk music' and existed 'right next door'.[182] In the 1950s two worlds had existed 'side-by-side' but largely separate.[183] John Bowe comments on the way the revival's search for authenticity led non-Irish people to find Irish pub sessions in London:

> Around that time in the '60s the folk revival was worldwide, especially in America and then England and I think Ireland, we had the Clancy Brothers and the Dubliners. It seemed that everything was happening at that time. And because groups like the Dubliners and the Clancys, you got people that weren't interested in Irish music, they were interested in singing, but you had people like Barney McKenna playing, so he introduced, by listening to him they were thinking 'oh this music is nice'.

This level of interest created a listenership for new groups that formed, including The Boys of the Lough, of which singer and flute and whistle player Cathal McConnell was a founding member. He started his career performing in folk clubs but decided 'to go the professional road' and toured in Britain and America from the early 1970s, an option the folk revival made possible.

Kevin Burke's career, beginning as fiddler in The Bothy Band in the 1970s, stemmed from the same source and he comments,

> In the '60s in London the folk hippies that would normally have been listening to English groups started realizing that this cultural thing was going on with the Irish community and they could get a glimpse and partake of an older living form of culture, folk culture. That spread the audience but it also opened the doors for Irish people to play more to audiences that weren't solely Irish. It started to open up a bit. When Irish bands in the '60s came to London they played in Irish halls. When I was playing with the Bothy Band in the '70s, we played in English halls. We played in the Shaftsbury Theatre, we played in the Rainbow Club… It was London's

[181] Maura Treacy, in Mick Treacy, interview with the author, 3 April 2013.
[182] Kevin Burke, interview with the author, 12 May 2012.
[183] Geraghty, *Luke Kelly*, p.45.

> premier rock venue and yet on this one night of the week they had an Irish band playing Irish fiddley-dee, which was, that wouldn't have happened in the '60s, or that would have been very rare in the '60s, put it that way. So the changes had already started and the Bothy Band kind of expanded that – things took another leap forward with the Bothy Band. But we weren't together very long, one of those bands that didn't last long but the influence was quite strong, you know.

Nonetheless, he criticizes the revival itself, believing that by putting folk music on stage its promoters separated the music from its original source and functions as social recreation and commentary. Despite the conservatism the term 'revival' implies, it involved a considerable amount of invention and change.[184]

This raises issues of authority and authenticity in folk music: who are the 'folk' and who speaks for them? John Lennon, of Beatles fame, said in a 1971 interview that he drew inspiration from white country and western music and black rhythm and blues, but expressed little regard for 'folk' music:

> As kids we were all opposed to folk songs because they were so middle-class. It was all college students with big scarfs [sic] and a pint of beer in their hands singing folk songs in what we call la-di-da voices – 'I worked in a mine in New-cast-le' and all that shit. There were very few real folk singers you know, though I liked Dominic Behan a bit and there was some good stuff to be heard in Liverpool. Just occasionally you hear very old records on the radio or TV of real workers in Ireland or somewhere singing these songs and the power of them is fantastic. But mostly folk music is people with fruity voices trying to keep alive something old and dead. It's all a bit boring.[185]

He identifies Dominic Behan and 'real workers in Ireland' as examples of authentic folk music, as opposed to its revivalist iterations. In the interview he stressed his views on working-class oppression and the need to give the people a voice. Though folk revival activists may have shared those beliefs, they found different ways of expressing them and in the process they seem to have alienated Lennon's cohort.

Kevin Burke adds to this image of folk music as a practice detached from its origins:

> Nearly all the English traditional music that I heard was on the stage. I heard very little of it in fisherman's huts and stuff like that. When you hear the Irish songs of emigration and songs with the background of farm work, a lot of the people singing it did that work – they were fisherman or they did cut turf, they did plant spuds, they did thatch roofs. They knew all that; *it was really their own story. It wasn't a story that they found interesting belonging to someone else*. (Emphasis added)

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[184] Eric J. Hobsbawm & Terence O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992), pp.7-8.

[185] John Lennon in Tariq Ali & Robin Blackburn, '"Power to the People": The Lost John Lennon Interview', *CounterPunch*, 8 Dec. 2005 (accessed June 2014) <http://www.counterpunch.org/2005/12/08/the-lost-john-lennon-interview/>.

He stresses music's role in articulating the history and memory of a community and its continued relevance to the present. To many of the migrant musicians that Kevin grew up around, playing in a concert hall, divorced from the origins of their art, was inconceivable. They played for dancers, for each other, or for entertainment within a familiar social space, but they had no other overt purpose. While only a minority of Irish musicians in Britain participated actively in formal associations such as CCÉ and folk clubs, both these forces had a considerable impact on the public profile of traditional music, while also influencing its development from an informal activity into a performance practice.

IV. 'The Middle Nation'

In *Working Lives* Linda McDowell argues that 'the focus in diasporic studies on the home, social life and the community has perhaps led to an over-emphasis on loss and longing rather than on change and translation, and neglects the place that waged work plays in the construction of identity and location in new identities'.[186] This chapter has sought to balance and integrate the two elements. While many Irish socialized within their ethnic community in Britain, especially in the years initially following migration, they could not isolate themselves from the society in which they lived. Preconceived attitudes British people held towards them, interactions with other ethnic groups, and class and gender divisions within the migrant population all shaped the identities and memories that emerged. At first glance it may seem that cultural practices, and music in particular, 'ghettoized' the Irish or inhibited their adjustment. However, as the examination of pubs and dance halls shows, traditions and performance practices were not transferred unaltered from one country to another; they reflected processes of adaptation and acclimatization.[187]

From the early post-war years a theme arose in writings about the Irish in Britain: their liminal status. In 1958 Desmond Fisher blamed the proximity of the two countries and the low cost of travel for a 'deep sense of "not belonging"', unwillingness to put down roots, and the tendency of Irishmen to 'seek solace for the pangs of "exile" in the bottom of a glass'.[188] Aindrias Ó Gallchobhair gave the phenomenon a name in his 1960 review of Dónall Mac Amhlaigh's book *Dialann*

[186] McDowell, *Working Lives*, p.35.
[187] O'Brien, 'Irish Associational Culture and Identity', p.224; Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain since World War II', p.60.
[188] Fisher, 'The Irishman in England', p.234.

Deoraí, writing of 'the tragic existence of the Irish middle-nation in Britain', the solitary and homesick Irish labourers in Britain's industrial centres.[189] Historian John A. Jackson picked up on the phrase and wrote in 1963,

> Most of them are well enough aware of the realities of Ireland and of Britain. They can go home and do, for visits, for holidays and even to stay after retirement. If nothing more they may go back to die. It is no longer necessary for them to give up the realities of old Ireland in making the move to Britain… *They belong to two communities* both real, each with ties upon them imposing a conflict of interests and obligations which cannot be resolved. *They are marginal men*, and are liable to remain so until they die. The proximity of Ireland to the rest of the British Isles ensures that their background retains a strong hold upon them and adds greatly to the difficulties of this marginal citizenship of what has been termed "the Irish Middle Nation".[190]

These observations applied to Irish *male* migrants of the immediate post-war years. Bronwen Walter has offered a similar formulation for Irish women, whom she sees as inhabiting an anomalous position in British society as 'outsiders inside'.[191] Roy Foster focuses predominantly on elites – intellectuals and politicians – and writes of the 'people who lived, or were in some sense "caught", between two countries', arguing that 'what they have in common is that their lives and their work were shaped by that awkward relationship'.[192]

Dónall Mac Amhlaigh took the phrase 'The Middle Nation' as the title for a series of three articles published in the *Irish Times* in October 1970, which shows layers of nuance and maturity he had developed in the years since writing *Dialann Deoraí*.[193] He distinguishes between the migrants 'who take to the English way of life like ducks to water' (largely professionals and business people) and those 'who have never really come to terms with their exile', the labourers referred to by Fisher, Ó Gallchobhair, Jackson, and even Mac Amhlaigh himself in his earlier work.[194] However, he criticizes both equally. He lambasts 'those who blithely forget they ever came from Ireland' and whose main fault is 'their complete and wholehearted apostasy' to the land of their birth and their compatriots. He also considers tragic those 'who have been all their adult life in Britain without ever coming to feel that

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[189] Aindrias Ó Gallchobhair, 'The Story of the Irish Workers in Britain', *Irish Press*, 18 June 1960.
[190] Emphasis added. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, pp.158-9.
[191] Walter, *Outsiders Inside*.
[192] R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (Allen Lane, London, 1993), p.xi.
[193] Sara Goek, 'Dónall Mac Amhlaigh and "The Middle Nation"', *The Dustbin of History* (15 Aug. 2013) <http://thedustbinofhistory.wordpress.com/2013/08/15/donall-mac-amhlaigh-and-the-middle-nation/>.
[194] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation', *Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1970.

they belonged there in any sense; and these are the real casualties of Emigration, the ones who won't or can't integrate'.[195] For him, integration does not mean assimilation and adoption of an English or British identity, but rather having a sense of cohesiveness or 'oneness' among the 'expatriate group', which he sees as inhibited by pervasive and petty class snobbery.[196] Despite these failings, at the end of the post-war era he depicts a community coming to terms with itself or 'finding our feet', as he titles the last article in the series. The Irish in Britain 'are now able to make a more mature appraisal of themselves and of their position in what has come to be known as the host community'.[197] He believes the English have grown to accept the Irish, an attitude 'accompanied, or perhaps preceded by, a change in our estimation of ourselves'.[198] By 1970 the mail-boat generation had come of age, moving from a 'sense of insecurity' to one of 'assurance', though the worsening of the situation in Northern Ireland would temporarily derail that progression.[199]

In charting the development of 'the middle nation', Mac Amhlaigh attempts to resolve the dilemma of being Irish and living in Britain, where no accepted Irish-British hybrid identity exists.[200] He said in a later interview that he had no anti-English prejudice but, speaking for the ethnic group as a whole, a lingering sense of equivocation remains: 'We have that feeling, on the one hand, of a certain amount of gratitude, if gratitude isn't misplaced, that we got work here when we couldn't have got it at home, and on the whole we've lived reasonably well here… On the other hand there's the fact of finding ourselves in a country we might perhaps rather not be in.'[201] Irish migrants in Britain did not, and could not, create 'another Ireland' that mirrored the one they left; they adapted facets of it to their new circumstances. Ethnic venues within British cities exemplify the 'middle nation' idea: migrants engaged in forms of leisure common to the society in which they lived, but gave them a distinctly Irish flavour. The use of these spaces as social centres and the

[195] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation', *Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1970.
[196] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Social Life and the Emigrant', *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1970.
[197] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Finding Our Feet', *Irish Times*, 16 Oct. 1970.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.
[200] This tension also existed in the nineteenth century (see Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity*, pp.14-7) and persists today. Often second- and third-generation Irish people adopt localized hybrid identities, such as 'London-Irish', but not national ones. Hickman, 'Diaspora Space and National (Re)Formations', p.37; Marc Scully, 'Discourses of Authenticity and National Identity among the Irish Diaspora in England' (Ph.D. diss., Open University, 2010), pp.233-6.
[201] Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, in Gray (ed.), *Writers Talking*, p.181.

soundscape of Irish music that emerged within them became ways of making the unfamiliar familiar in everyday life.

As the community matured they came to accept and examine, if not to fully embrace, their status as a 'middle nation'. Liam Harte argues that 'the dialectical tension between adherence to a fixed originary identity and the evolution of a flexible, contingent migrant identity' constitutes one of the 'central tropes' in the literature of the Irish in Britain and each author gives it an individual colour.[202] The same applies to oral histories as narrators express ambivalent or contradictory attitudes towards both Ireland and Britain. This chapter has shown that the evolution of cultural practices exhibits a similar tension: music moved from rural farmhouses to urban venues and influences from the folk revival gradually trickled into the river of tradition. Migrants who played, listened, and danced to traditional music remained unquestionably Irish but in ways that reflected their new environment. The next chapter examines how that gradual transformation affected their relationship to Ireland.

[202] Liam Harte, '"You want to be a British Paddy?": The Anxiety of Identity in Post-War Irish Migrant Writing', in Keogh, O'Shea & Quinlan (eds.), *The Lost Decade*, pp.234, 236.

Chapter 5

'Your Home Is in Your Shoes'

Stuart Hall writes, 'migration is a one way trip. There is no "home" to go back to.'[1] It does not cease to exist in a geographical sense, but its presence in the imagination or memory will no longer match the reality. Emigration forever changes migrants, unmooring them from their homeplace. The images of home that evolve over time may show traces of a softening of the harsh corners and accentuating of the rosy hues. Even if migrants maintain transnational connections and continue to visit regularly, the Ireland that they return to will never be the one they left. Migration creates an absence. The search to fill it might start at the time of departure, or developments over the life course – marriage, children, illness, retirement, or the death of a partner or family member – may prompt a reassessment. At the end of Chapter 2 I presented a case study of a couple I interviewed, Martin and Teresa McMahon, who returned to live in Ireland after fifty years in London. They reflect on the challenges of migration and return:

> MARTIN: The way I look at this is: once an emigrant, always an emigrant.
>
> TERESA: Yes, mentally, yes.
>
> MARTIN: We came back here to Ireland. We don't know anybody, even now, because we're old. [TERESA: That's right.] Anybody we did know is dead. [TERESA: That's right.] As a matter of fact, you've got to go to the graveyard to find the name. We would've been better off not to come back at all.
>
> TERESA: Oh yes, we would've been.
>
> MARTIN: Because we were happy where we were.
>
> TERESA: An emigrant becomes a state of mind and to me I'm still the same as if I lived in England.
>
> MARTIN: I'll put it this way to you, an emigrant's home is in their shoes, that's where your home is, just in your shoes. That's the description I have for it, because you're always, mentally, I wouldn't exactly describe as on the run, but you're on the move all the time. Even sitting here talking right now, I'm still in the middle of London somewhere. [TERESA: Yeah.] You just unawares convert yourself into that way of life even though we still have, we're as Irish as the day we left. But mentally, you're neither Irish or English.

[1] Quoted in Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, p.9.

> TERESA: But then there are old Irish over there still and I know I can go to them now, or you can or any of us can, and they will just sit down and cry and cry and cry wanting to be in Ireland. They miss it. This is genuine.
>
> MARTIN: Yes, but what they don't realize –
>
> TERESA: I know they don't, but they do miss it, Martin, they are like that.
>
> MARTIN: They don't realize that everybody they know is dead.
>
> TERESA: But it doesn't seem to work this way. There's rooms over there with the Irish flag and shamrocks –
>
> MARTIN: There's a part of your life gone missing somewhere and you look for that 'til your end, until you die really. That's what I mean by mentally you're on the move. Your home really, as I said, your home is in your shoes.

In saying 'your home is in your shoes', Martin negates the difference between 'here' and 'there', 'home' and 'away', because he and Teresa feel unsettled whether in Ireland or England. Migrancy becomes a state of mind. While Irish migrants settle into lives abroad and adapt to new ways of life, many continue to long for their birthplace, symbolized by the 'Irish flag' and 'shamrock' decorations in their rooms. They maintain this longing even if the families, friends, and neighbours they grew up with in Ireland are dead. Those who return, like the McMahons, may feel unable to remove themselves fully from the land where they spent most of their adult lives and to readjust to a country that has vastly altered since their childhoods.

This chapter argues that the process of migration changes individuals' mindsets, their views of Ireland, and their understandings of the meaning of 'home', all of which evolve over time. Analyzing migrants' transnational ties and the question of return offers insights into these changes. While scholars of cultural studies, geography, and sociology have addressed questions of home and return, they remain largely absent from historical discourses.[2] Historians recognize the impact of returnees on perpetuating further migration and the dream of return held by many members of the Irish diaspora, but they need to view it as part of the process of migration.[3] Writing in 1958 on nineteenth-century returnees, Arnold Schrier asked, 'what compelled them to come back? …The answer, it appears, is as complex and varied as that host of personal choices and desires which induced them to emigrate in

[2] Much of the recent work sociologists and geographers have done on Irish return migrants in the twentieth and twenty-first century focuses on those who left in the 1980s and returned during the Celtic Tiger. This generation has very different characteristics than their post-war counterparts. See the works of Deirdre Conlon, Caitríona Ní Laoire, and David Ralph listed in the bibliography.

[3] On returned migrants' impact on Ireland, social networks, and the myth of return see: Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, pp.24-9; Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, pp.129-46.

the first place.'[4] My interviews indicate that those who chose to return from the US and Britain – whether after five years or fifty – speak of their decision and readjustment in the context of their life stories and historic narratives of migration.

I. Transnational Ties

Migrants remained connected to the place of their birth in a multitude of ways: they played and danced to Irish music, joined ethnic associations, communicated with family members in Ireland and across the diaspora, and visited Ireland. They inhabited a 'transnational social space' spanning the Atlantic and the Irish Sea and 'home' remained prominent 'in their consciousness'.[5] Examining their networks reveals 'the fluidity and diversity' of exchanges between people, communities, and nations, 'and complicate[s] the unilateral relationship between belonging and location by investigating the ways in which new forms of political and cultural belonging are anchored in multi-local ties'.[6] While sociologists and geographers sometimes assume that transnationalism is a recent by-product of globalization,[7] historians have shown that it has a long history.[8] Travel remained lengthy and expensive until recent decades, but migrants maintained contact via extensive networks of letters and personal relationships, as Kerby Miller and David Fitzpatrick have demonstrated.[9]

Despite technological advances, older forms of communication prevailed well into the twentieth century. Kevin Henry, living in Chicago, says he stayed in touch with family 'through letters. It's only in recent times that we got the computer. I don't know nothing, I was raised with a candle, if you know what I mean.' Four of

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[4] Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, p.130.
[5] Delaney, 'Transnationalism, Networks and Emigration from Post-War Ireland', p.289.
[6] Sarah Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier & Mimi Sheller (eds.), *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (Berg, Oxford & New York, 2003), p.3.
[7] This perspective is evident in: Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch & Cristina Blanc-Szanton, 'Toward a Definition of Transnationalism: Introductory Remarks and Research Questions' and Palmira N. Rios, 'Comments on Rethinking Migration: A Transnational Perspective', in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol.645, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (July 1992), pp.x, 9, 228-9.
[8] Barry Goldberg, 'Historical Reflections on Transnationalism, Race, and the American Immigrant Saga', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol.645, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (July 1992), pp.201-15; Simon Macdonald, 'Transnational History: A Review of Past and Present Scholarship', University College London; Niall Whelehan, 'Ireland beyond the Nation-State: Antecedents of Transnational History in Irish Historiography', Working Paper Series, University of Edinburgh (29 Aug. 2013).
[9] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*; Kerby A. Miller, Arnold Schrier, Bruce D. Boling & David N. Doyle (eds.), *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003); David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (Cork University Press, Cork, 1994).

Kevin's siblings settled in Ireland and the other seven scattered across England and America, making theirs a truly transnational family, but one that remained close despite the distances separating them (image 5.1 below). Even the phone could prove difficult, as Packie Browne recalled in comparing the 1960s to the present day:

> You live in a smaller world now. That time, when I'd ring home, when the phone connected some years later, before that it was only just to write home, but when the phone was connected first, I would have to get through five exchanges before I'd get home. You went from Luton to London, London to Liverpool, Liverpool to Dublin, Dublin to Tralee, Tralee to Ballyduff, Ballyduff to my place. And if anything happened in that, it went dead. You were ringing from a phone box, we didn't have a phone, and you had to have a pocket of ten-penny pieces and then when you started putting them in, the next thing the box was full so you couldn't talk again. That's what it was like.

Another migrant in England recollected, 'you wrote letters, and when anything happened you had a telegram – it generally came with bad news. Letter writing went on between myself and my mother, and with my sisters in America. That was the only contact we had – not like today where you can pick up a phone.'[10] Despite the



Image 5.1: A transnational family: the only time all eleven children in the Henry family came together was in 1972 at their mother's funeral, where this photograph was taken. They stand left to right in order from youngest to oldest and Kevin is fourth from the left. Photograph courtesy of the Henry family.

[10] Anonymous contributor b.1932 in Co. Mayo, 'Luton Irish Forum', Moving Here: Stories, NA UK.

difficulties, Irish people spread across vast geographical distances managed to sustain close-knit social networks.

The development of portable recording devices enabled musicians (many of whom could not read music) to share tunes and send audio messages. Danny Meehan purchased a reel-to-reel recorder in London in 1963. He and his cousin Johnny (image 5.2) used it to send greetings back to Donegal:

> DANNY: I'm after just meeting Johnny here now down the road on the job. Saturday afternoon and Johnny wants to say a few words to everybody at home. Over to you, Johnny.
>
> JOHNNY: Hello, father. Hello, Jimmy, Nan, and Auntie Miriam in Charles and Manus, Patrick and the lot, hope they're all keeping well back in Ireland. How's the work going on back at home? Suppose it won't be long now 'til you'll be at the hay. I would like to be at home for it myself. Are you still cutting the turf up in Johnny Owen's bog? Our bank must be cut out there now. I sent Brendán a few pound not so long ago, but I got no answer from him because I shifted away. I was traveling on with a cable firm. I intend going home later in the year if I can. Danny's going to play MacLeod's reel now for you. Same as Charlie McCahill.
>
> DANNY: Not quite as good as Charlie, Johnny.[11]

It is a curious mix of the traditional emigrant letter – asking after family, friends, and neighbours, giving a brief mention of the way things are abroad, and expressing a longing for home – and a new technology that allowed the migrants' voices, and in this case music, to be heard.



Image 5.2: Danny Meehan, Johnny Meehan and Johnny's wife Breda in Kilburn, c.1958. Photograph courtesy of John Daly (Danny's nephew).

[11] Danny Meehan, *Drimalost and Beyond*, 2 CDs (Cairdeas na bhFidléirí, 2011), CD 2, tracks 31-2.

The advent of cheaper and faster travel enabled many migrants to make regular trips to Ireland. Visits reinforced their personal connections and the circular flow problematizes views of migration as a strictly 'temporary or permanent undertaking'.[12] The ease of travel to Britain made it an attractive destination and 'individual life stories underscore the extent of continuous movement back and forth across the Irish sea'.[13] Vincent Campbell recalls the journey between Scotland and Derry:

> I came home often enough… The way it was that time people were that near they didn't think much of going across. There was a Derry boat would take you across. There was a Derry boat, that was a cattle boat, and if people didn't have no money they would [be] hired to mind a few cattle, they had to follow the cattle on the voyage. 'If you give me hand and follow the cattle, I'll let you over for nothing.' That often happened because people hadn't got the money. Four pound, four pound it was in English money to get over that time.

Traveling over from Britain was commonplace. Even those who lacked the cost of a ticket could find the means to make the journey, as Vincent describes. Many men who worked in labouring jobs went home at least once a year: John Gildea says, 'I always came back for a holiday' and Martin Treacy says, 'I used to come back nearly all the time visiting. I'd visit [my brother], him in Dublin. I used to come across to Dublin and I'd spend time with him and then I'd come down and visit down here [in Galway] and go back again. I used not to spend my holidays there [in England].' This pattern continued years after emigration, with 74 percent of Irish elders (over the age of sixty) surveyed in Harringey, London in 1988 reporting that they made regular trips to Ireland and 52 percent said they visited every year.[14]

For those living in the United States, visits were more difficult and expensive, but they had an advantage over previous generations. Jimmy Marshall, who settled in Worchester, MA, recognizes that difference and when asked if he stayed connected to Ireland said,

> Oh very much so. I often questioned my brother, he went when he was eighteen also and came back five years later, I said, 'how did you do that?' I could never stay away that long. That was emigration back then. People left for England, Australia, it was sad because you were leaving your folks and all your siblings behind, but years before that when all the aunts and the uncles left Ireland to find work in America or Australia (a lot of them went

[12] McCarthy, *Personal Narratives of Irish and Scottish Migration*, p.205.
[13] See Chapter 4, section I. Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.67.
[14] Irish Liaison Unit, *The Social Situation of Irish Elderly in Harringey* (London: Haringey Council, 1991), cited in Elizabeth Malcolm, *Elderly Return Migration from Britain to Ireland: A Preliminary Study*, Report No.44 (National Council for the Elderly, Dublin, 1996), p.49.

> to Australia too), you know they went on a ship and it took like six days to come from Cork, Cobh of Cork, to New York, so that was like a whole week on the ocean. Now you can do it in five hours, so that's a good thing.

Jimmy still regularly visits his siblings and their families in Ireland and often those trips correspond with music festivals, allowing him to maintain a cultural connection as well. Irish ethnic organizations recognized the desire for migrants and their children to visit Ireland and sponsored charter trips. Karin Joyce spent many summers in Galway with her mother's family and recalls traveling from Boston in the 1960s and '70s (see images 5.3 and 5.4):

> Years ago when you went to Ireland there were charter flights, you would sign up for your tickets at social clubs so they probably got a cut of it or whatever or however it worked, but you had to be a member so long before you'd get the deal. The price was lower, you'd sign up by February. So all the people on the plane were people that you knew, so you were traveling with all your friends, literally, and there were always priests and nuns on the plane. And yeah, people would play [music] on the plane as well. I remember Kevin Caples, who is my cousin, he's Johnny's son, he played all the way over standing up in the aisle! …And of course when the plane landed the whole plane would clap – nobody does that anymore. Mary Concannon was a woman that had the Irish Social Club in Dorchester and you would sign up there; that was one of the places. In the days of the vaccinations they would have a day that everybody would come and get vaccinated at the club.

Both Karin and Jimmy comment on the differences between maintaining connections in the present compared to their youth in the 1960s and earlier times. Despite the ease and relatively low cost of travel, some migrants chose not to visit Ireland and Brendan Tonra, whose parents and family had all relocated to Boston (with the exception of one sister) says, 'I went back after five years when I first came over but I didn't go back again for about twenty-five years and then I went back every two years almost since.' Special events (among them a fifty-year school reunion and a music award) prompted his later visits.

Marriage or children could lessen the frequency of travel, whether from Britain or the United States. Packie Browne, who settled in Luton, England, recalls, '[I] came home every year until I got married and then we bought a house and probably was a couple years then before we were able, myself and my wife, were able to come then.' Johnny Connolly comments on the expense involved when traveling with children: 'even after getting married we used to come, but then when the kids, when we had the two lads in England we couldn't afford to come as often. The money wouldn't be that great at that time either, but we were scraping through,



Image 5.3: On her first trip to Ireland in 1964, Karin Joyce traveled by ship with her mother and brother.



Image 5.4: They stand beneath a sign for the bus to Shannon Airport in Limerick.
Photographs courtesy of Karin Joyce.

saving a few to come to Ireland.' Having married and settled in New York City in 1959 Jerry Lynch says, 'I came home nearly every three or four years, sometimes less, but it never went beyond the four years before I came back here. I came home for two weeks, three weeks, you know that kind of thing. 'Twas a bit awkward coming home when my son and my daughter were young. Traveling with kids is

something I wouldn't wish on anybody!' Likewise, Kevin Henry recalls, 'I went back quite a few times. While the kids were in school I had to hold up here and then when they all left school I used to go back there every couple of years.' Though children meant visits decreased in frequency and increased in expense, the desire to have the next generation understand their connection to Ireland gave them greater significance.[15]

As the previous two chapters argue, even when separated from Ireland by geographical distance, music and the communities centred on it enabled migrants to reinforce their cultural connections and transcend 'the sense of dislocation from home in the process'.[16] Playing or listening to Irish music surrounded by Irish faces and voices might act as a (at least temporary) substitute for Ireland. It could also provide unique opportunities to visit, particularly as the annual All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil grew in popularity. Nicky McAuliffe met musicians who travelled from abroad to participate: 'there was always people coming over, competing as well. You had the overseas [competition category] and you'd have a big contingent coming from London of course.' He elaborates:

> As a matter of fact, Paddy O'Brien came over and the famous visit, 1956, to the fleadh in Ennis. 'Tis in the song, there was a song made about it.[17] He played great selections in the concert and they're still famous, if you know what I mean. Paddy Cronin always came over for the fleadhs in Listowel… He came over [for others] as well because he always speaks about coming over in 1960 for Boyle and himself and Ciarán Mac Mathúna were together up in Boyle.[18] The New York Céilí Band came over in 1960 and competed in Boyle.

Many of these renowned musicians had emigrated, because, like others of their generation, they needed to earn a living. Nicky, at the time, had never left Ireland, and relished the opportunity to hear and meet them. They welcomed the chance to return and reconnect with the musicians and musical culture of their homeland. Billy

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[15] Mark Boyle, *Metropolitan Anxieties: On the Meaning of the Irish Catholic Adventure in Scotland* (Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey, 2011), pp.115-48; Ward, *Exile, Emigration and Irish Writing*, p.viii; Michael and Eileen Farragher, interview with Virginia Ferris, 20 June 2011, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU; Mike Farragher, interview with Madison Devine and Linda Dowling Almeida, 14 Oct. 2011, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.

[16] Collins, ''Tis Like They Never Left', p.492.

[17] Paddy O'Brien, from Newtown, Co. Tipperary, spent many years in the United States. He is credited with revolutionizing the playing of the two-row button accordion, particularly the B/C tuning system and style. The song Nicky mentions is 'The Fleadh Cheoil in Ennis' by Robbie McMahon, written in honour of the 1956 All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil (see Appendix 4 for the lyrics).

[18] Paddy Cronin himself says: 'During my 40 years in the States, I made 19 trips home and have hardly missed an All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil since I attended my first in Boyle in 1960. The Fleadh is a marvellous reunion.' Paddy Cronin, 'My Life and Music', *Sliabh Luachra: Journal of Cumann Luachra*, vol.1, no.6 (Nov. 1991), p.33.

Clifford and his parents John and Julia 'used to come back every year for the fleadh cheoils, most every year anyways. I would have been in [competitions] with the really top names in flute playing like Matt Molloy used to be going for competitions at the time and Seamus Tansey, people like that. Of course I didn't get a look in, did I! Eventually I scooped it in 1970 and won it in 1970 then.'

Irish migrants and their descendants speak with particular pride of earning recognition in Ireland. Banjo player Liam Farrell and his musical partner accordion player Raymond Roland both lived in London and featured on Ciarán Mac Mathúna's radio programmes in Ireland. Liam fondly remembers the impact of these broadcasts: 'I used to go back home like a film star! …Being on the radio was a big thing. I'd go home and everyone'd be all around me saying "oh, I heard you on the radio, you were on a couple times this week."' A few musicians, including Liam, got the chance to tour Ireland with musical groups. In 1959, Frank Thornton, chair of the Irish Musicians' Association of America organized a tour of Ireland by American-born Irish musicians, singers, and dancers. He believed they had a positive impact on traditional music in Ireland, which many thought in danger of dying out in the 1950s:

> We gave twenty-three shows throughout Ireland in twenty-seven days. They were three-hour shows… We started out in Listowel, my hometown. We got close to 700 people into the theatre. There was a line for two blocks to see the Americans perform. So we had to come back and we gave another show and filled it again. It went over very good. I remember up in Ballina a priest came on the stage there and he said that he had to admit that it took the Yanks to bring back the culture of Ireland, because as I say at that time it was fading to a certain extent. That was my idea at the back of this concert, was to show what was being done in the United States.[19]

Chicago fiddler Johnny McGreevy participated in the tour and recalls, 'it was really terrific. It was the best time I can remember… The bus brought us from here to there and it was really terrific and I met great players and great people over there. And I met all my relatives, so that was a great thing too.'[20] Eamon Flynn took part in a tour of Ireland with the Boston-based Connacht Céilí Band in 1970 (image 5.5) and he highlights the positive reception they received and the novelty of the occasion: 'every place the dances were packed, out the door, a band from America.' The *Connacht Tribune*, in terms similar to Thornton's, wrote that the tour 'will show the people of Ireland that Irish music and culture is very much in evidence in Boston'

[19] Frank Thornton, interview with Mick Moloney, 6 May 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[20] Johnny McGreevy, interview with Mick Moloney, 5 April 1977, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.

and it emphasized the musicians' Irish birthplaces or roots.[21] If, living outside Ireland, migrants felt distanced from 'authentic' Irishness, then achieving recognition in their place of origin validated their claim on the culture.

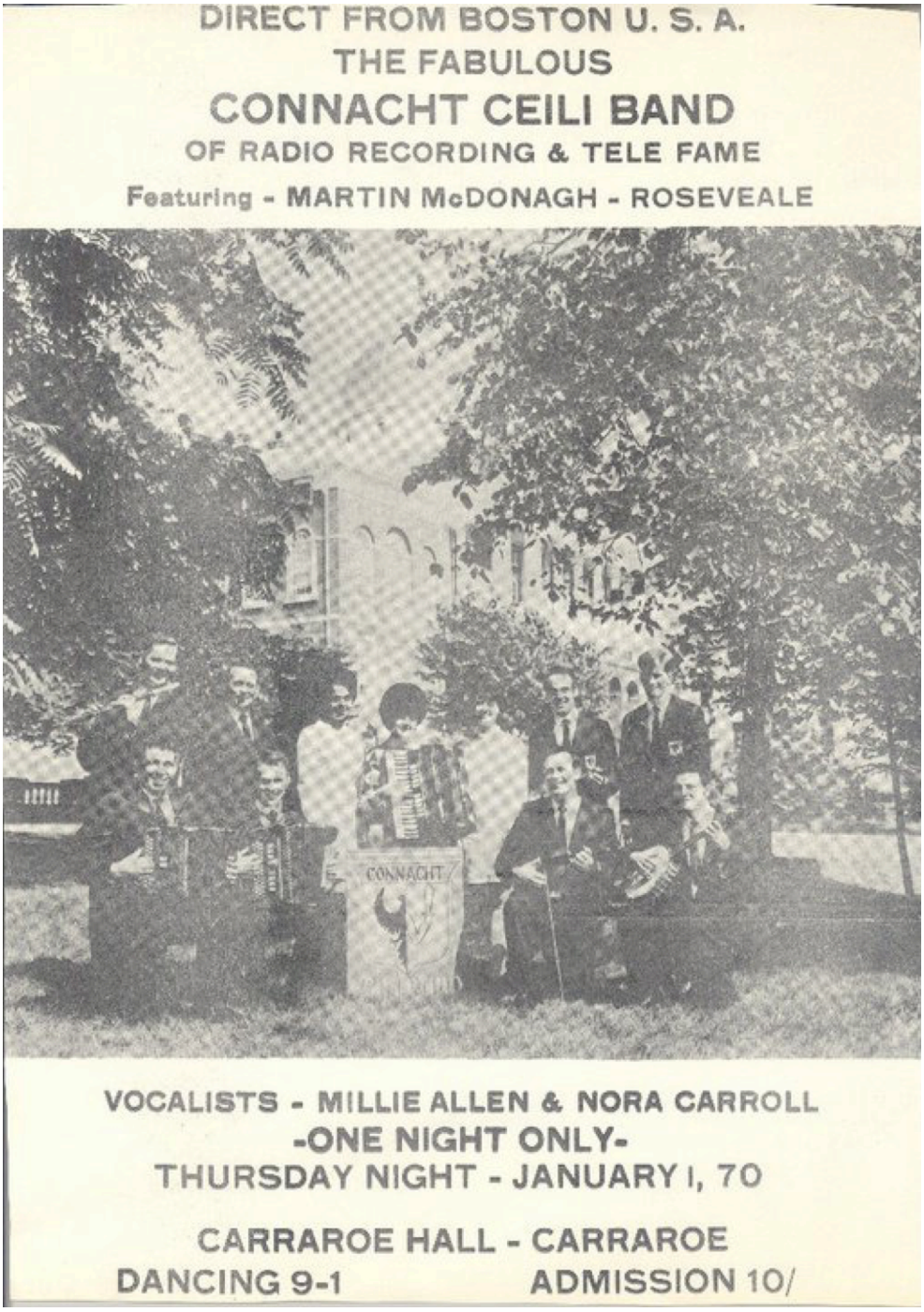


Image 5.5: A poster advertising the Connacht Céilí Band's appearance at the hall in Carraroe, Co. Galway. It emphasizes their connection to the locality by putting Martin McDonagh's name at the top. The photograph features: back row – Brendan Tonra (flute), Mike McDonagh (music director), Nora Carroll (vocals), Sally Kelly (piano), Millie Allen (vocals), Larry Reynolds (fiddle), and Jack Erwin (drums); front row – Martin McDonagh (accordion), Tommy Sheridan (accordion), Eamon Flynn (fiddle), and Jimmy Kelly (banjo). Courtesy of Tommy Sheridan.

[21] 'Connacht Ceili Band from Boston', *Connacht Tribune*, 19 Dec. 1969.

II. Imagining 'Home'

Through Irish communities in their places of settlement, social networks that extended to Ireland and across the diaspora, and regular visits to their home places, post-war migrants kept their Irishness alive. However, maintaining an Irish identity in Britain or America and feeling comfortable with it could be two different things. As Martin and Teresa McMahon highlight at the beginning of this chapter, the state of migrancy influences perceptions of home and belonging. Scholarly literature on immigration focuses on adjustment or assimilation in the host country, but how do those processes affect transnational ties or views of the home country? When migrants 'acclimatize' to life in Britain or America, how does that change the way they think of Ireland?

The language migrant narratives use illustrates the types of connections maintained with Ireland, particularly the term 'home,' that 'most ambiguous of four-letter words'.[22] While 'home' can refer to a house or place of residence, it can also imply either a nation or local area, it can have real or imagined connotations, and its usage can vary over time as the individual's circumstances change.[23] Avtar Brah and Iain Chambers both distinguish between 'going home', as return to a place and its association with an idealized past, from 'being at home' or 'feeling at home', signifying a deeper level of comfort and acceptance in the present.[24] This distinction appears in oral histories and memoirs, where the immediate textual concordance of the term 'home' can reveal individuals' mindsets and attitudes to Ireland and their place of settlement abroad. Analysis of the concept draws attention to the ways in which national contexts – the United States and Great Britain – affected migrants' adjustment processes and perspectives over time. Studying 'home' and rootedness, whether real or imagined, also adds emphasis to transnational scholarship's focus on connections across borders and provides a counterpoint to the study of mobility.[25]

Post-war migrants to Britain often intended to stay only a short time. As one man said of his decision to go to England rather than further afield, 'there wasn't an

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[22] Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation*, p.620.
[23] David Ralph, '"Home Is Where the Heart Is"? Understandings of Home among Irish-born Return Migrants from the United States', *Irish Studies Review*, vol.17, no.2 (May 2009), p.184; Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation*, pp.620-7.
[24] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (Routledge, London & New York, 1996), pp.192-3; Iain Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journeys in Postmodernity* (Routledge, London & New York, 1990), p.104.
[25] Ralph, '"Home is Where the Heart Is"?', pp.184-5.

air of finality about it. You half convinced yourself that this was a temporary move.'[26] This could lead to continuing isolation and Mick Treacy says of many Irish migrants, 'they were lost, you see. That's why I say a lot of people over there were living, they're still living in this little Ireland that was way back and 'tis gone, long since gone.' They viewed Ireland as 'home' even after decades, though not necessarily in a realistic way. For the most part Mick moved easily within British society, but he recalls how, if he felt lonely, he would go to the Galtymore to 'meet someone from home'. John Bowe and Liam Farrell remain living in London and both speak of visits 'home' to Ireland. Martin Treacy lived in England for thirty-nine years, but refers to visits to his brother in Dublin and to his family in Galway, and permanent return all as 'coming home'. He says of fellow returned migrant Roger Sherlock, 'he's home now'. Roger applies the same terms, saying of his decision to move back to Ireland after forty-three years in London, 'we came home then', though he returned not to his birthplace, but to Meath where his wife's family lived. He says of his schoolmate Brendan Tonra, who migrated to Boston, 'he hasn't been home now for a couple years'.[27] Packie Browne lived in England for eighteen years and uses similar language, saying, 'I came home in '82' and referring to visits from his siblings who live in the US as 'coming home'. In his case 'home' is the village where he grew up and now resides. While Britain may have attracted migrants because of its proximity, even a short geographical distance, combined with the sense of dislocation and instances of discrimination, could mean that they never quite felt 'at home' there.

The documentary film *I Only Came over for a Couple of Years* captures the ambiguities of this situation in interviews with elderly Irish people living in London. They are asked about their identity and where they consider home. One woman says, 'my home is here now because of my family… The spiritual home I suppose is Ireland; our physical home is here. Our immediate responsibilities are here, but my spiritual home I'd say would still be Ireland.' Her husband adds to this: 'but home is where our parents were. Once the parents were gone that was it. They were sort of a barrier between us and death and now that barrier is gone. We're the barrier to our

[26] Frank Horan (emigrated 1955), 'A New Life – A New World', Moving Here: Stories, NA UK.
[27] At the time of the interview with Roger Sherlock, Brendan Tonra still lived in Boston. He passed away in February 2014.

kids, hopefully. Home is where the heart is.'[28] They identify different types of homes: Ireland may constitute a 'spiritual home', but they have made their lives in Britain, with jobs and children. This draws attention to the fact that the meaning of home could change over time, affected by events such as the death of parents in Ireland and the birth of children in Britain. Bridie Collins left Tipperary in 1948 and describes how her views evolved: 'I was never lonely for Ireland. Once you had that first holiday at home you were glad to get back. [But] Ireland back then was a Third World country… After the first holiday I wasn't a bit bothered if I never got back again, although I did come home quite often… But, once I started a family of my own, England was home.'[29]

Migrants who went to America historically rarely returned[30] and this fact, combined with the distance, meant that those who left in the post-war era might have expected a more permanent journey than their counterparts who went to Britain. Some still use the word 'home' in reference to Ireland, but often qualify it with additional words, differentiating between 'home' the place of current residence and 'home' the place of origin. They rarely use the term to pertain to Ireland generally. Jerry Lynch, a returned migrant, refers to living in Ireland with the phrase 'home here', saying, 'when I came home here to Ireland.' The addition of 'here' makes it clear he speaks of Clare (the place he grew up and returned to) as home, leaving open the possibility that during his time in New York City he could have said 'home here in New York'. Jimmy Marshall, who has lived in Worcester, MA for over fifty years, also uses qualifying terms, saying 'back in Ireland' or 'back home to Ireland' and calling the farm where he grew up in Co. Kerry 'my old home' or 'my old homestead'. Both Jerry and Jimmy visited Ireland regularly after they emigrated, but despite those connections, they recognize the contingency of 'home'. Brendan Tonra did not return to Ireland and never used 'home' to refer to Ireland or his birthplace in Mayo anywhere in the interview. When talking about visits he said of his first 'I went back' and of later visits only 'I went' followed by the reason for the trip. The fact that all of his family except one sister relocated to Boston may have contributed to his linguistic shift.

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[28] *I only Came over for a Couple of Years… Interviews with London Irish Elders*, directed by David Kelly, with the Irish Studies Centre, London Metropolitan University (2005).
[29] In Frances Browner (ed.), *Coming Home* (Original Writing, Dublin, 2008), p.204.
[30] Return rates in the nineteenth century are estimated at ten percent. 't Hart, 'Irish Return Migration in the Nineteenth Century', pp.223-31; Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p.426.

Despite accepting the likelihood of permanent migration upon departure for America and adjustment to life there, not all migrants felt 'at home'. Liam Clancy, when asked whether he considered Ireland or America home, avoided the question and talked about his visits to Ireland. Later in the interview he describes the feeling he got visiting the Gaeltacht in Ring, Co. Waterford: 'I fell in love with it. I felt that all my life I had been living someplace other than home and when I found myself in Ring I said, "this is it, this is home". There was six acres of land and a cottage for sale up on the cliff and 800 quid, freehold, I bought it out of my back pocket. It's been home ever since.'[31] He expresses similar sentiments to Martin McMahon, feeling that migrancy unmoored him. Eventually, he felt 'at home' neither in the place of his birth nor settlement, but in Ring, a community that remains intimately tied to the ways of life he knew in his youth. He suggests that this was not the case in other parts of Ireland: 'the home that you leave when you emigrate becomes a snapshot and it's frozen in time in your mind. Everybody I've ever known who goes back home, they can't believe it, life has changed so much. [*Laughs*] Did we expect it to stop still just because we left? But the changes that happen [are] immense.'[32] In this instance, though going 'back home' refers to returning to Ireland, he supports Stuart Hall's statement that a migrant can never truly go home, because the place where they grew up no longer corresponds to their memories. Instead, he found a new place that felt like home.

The context of initial emigration could affect migrants' views of home and return. Con Griffin grew up in a poor rural family in Co. Tipperary and worked as a hired agricultural labourer from a young age. Despite lingering resentment over the way schoolmasters treated him and an intense dislike of Éamon de Valera he says, 'when I left Ireland [in 1963], I left my baggage behind me too. I left all the guilts and all the baggage and all the rubbish that I would consider Irish stuff, I left all that there.'[33] He enjoyed all London had to offer, trained as a plasterer, and ran his own successful business. However, he says, 'I always wanted to come back to Ireland because I had this idea that Ireland was this lovely place, you know. In spite of I'd left it cursing and swearing and saying I'd never again look at it.'[34] He suggests that

[31] Liam Clancy, interview with Miriam Nyhan, 29 March 2009, Ireland House Oral History Collection, AIA NYU.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Con Griffin, interview with Conor Long, 14 Nov. 2014, *Oral History @UCC*.
[34] Ibid.

the Troubles in the 1970s awoke a sense of patriotism in him, reconnecting him to his Irishness, and he eventually returned to live in Rylane, Co. Cork. When the interviewer asked him if he felt Ireland was 'home', he responded:

> Yes, but it didn't matter to me where, because I had left when I was a kid and really, when I come to think of it, my real home was probably London. You know, because I could get a little bit excited when there was a hurling match on and when Tipperary are playing Cork, just for the hell of it I might put out a flag and get all excited about Tipperary, but that would be only a one-day-wonder, 'twould never last two days. I haven't got that kind of, you know, thing about place or anything like that.[35]

While some migrants remember their childhoods through rose-tinted glasses,[36] Con finds that impossible. He recognizes the misery of his youth, which contributes to his lack of strong connections to Tipperary. He admits that London was probably his 'real home', the place where he matured and came into his own. His words highlight the ambivalent and often-contradictory attitudes migrants could have towards Ireland and the meaning of 'home'.

These varied perspectives all suggest differences between settlement and belonging in migrants' adjustment to life abroad and their relationship to Ireland.[37] Fintan O'Toole writes,

> One of the things that culture reminds us of is that home is much more than a name we give to a dwelling place. It is also a whole set of connections and affectations, the web of mutual recognition that we spin around ourselves and that gives us a place in the world… In Irish, the terms *sa mbaile* and *sa bhaile*, the equivalents of the English *at home*, are never used in the narrow sense of home as a dwelling. They imply, instead, that wider sense of a place in the world, a feeling of belonging that is buried deep within the world's meaning.[38]

While this may not be an essentially Irish sentiment, as O'Toole implies, he strikes at the heart of the difference between home as residence and home as belonging. The classic diasporic 'dream of return' conceives of home as a nation.[39] For first-generation migrants it could have other possible meanings: the local area where they grew up, a sense of familiarity or security, or close-knit familial and social

[35] Con Griffin, interview with Conor Long, 14 Nov. 2014, *Oral History @UCC*.
[36] Caitríona Ní Laoire, 'Narratives of "Innocent Irish Childhoods": Return Migration and Intergenerational Family Dynamics', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.37, no.8 (2011), p.1255.
[37] Leavey, Sembhi & Livingstone, 'Older Irish Migrants Living in London', p.776.
[38] Fintan O'Toole, *The Ex-Isle of Erin* (New Island Books, Dublin, 1996), p.136.
[39] Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, pp.192-3; Ní Laoire, 'Settling Back?', p.200; William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol.1, no.1 (Spring 1991), pp.83-99.

networks.[40] David Ralph argues that 'loosening of home's more territorially-bound definitions' does not necessarily 'dim the longing for a stable, settled and bounded interpretation of home,' a longing that could lead to consideration of return to Ireland.[41]

III. Return Migration

Active participation in ethnic cultural practices and social networks could provide a satisfactory substitute to living in Ireland, helping some migrants feel 'at home' in Britain or America. As they put down new roots – getting married and starting families – and lost personal ties to Ireland as parents or siblings passed away, what may have started as a youthful adventure or temporary move could turn into a lifetime. When asked if he considered returning to live in Ireland, Kevin Henry replied, 'no, I didn't, no. There was nothing there. When you leave it at a young age, you sort of… Well the savage loves his native land if you know what I mean. You love to belong to it, but to live in it is another story.' Unlike Con Griffin, he seems unable to separate Ireland from its associations with the hardships of his youth. He takes great pride in his Irish identity while choosing to remain firmly and happily settled in Chicago. London-based photographer Paddy Fahey wrote, 'my wife and I never thought of going back to Ireland, we felt the same way. I'd be *homesick* if I left London. I *go home* every year – I've been going *home* for fifty years – and 'tis alright. It's very restful and relaxing, I look forward to it. But if you want to learn anything about Ireland, come to London, that's all. Knock around the pubs'.[42] He speaks of both Ireland and London as 'home'. Kevin works to actively promote Irish music in Chicago and Paddy Fahey spent his career photographing Irish events in London. They came to terms with both being Irish and living outside Ireland.

For other migrants, maintenance of ties to an ethnic community heightened their awareness of the physical distance from their homeland and influenced their desire to return permanently.[43] This extended to music: playing traditional music could help musicians adapt to life in London or Boston while remaining in touch

[40] Ralph, '"Home Is Where the Heart Is"?', p.191; David Ralph & Lynn A. Staeheli, 'Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities', *Geography Compass*, vol.5, no.7 (2011), p.518.
[41] David Ralph, 'Understanding Home: The Case of Irish-born Return Migrants from the United States, 1996-2006' (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2011), p.4.
[42] Emphasis added. Paddy Fahey, *The Irish in London: Photographs and Memories* (Centerprise, London, 1991), p.44.
[43] Elizabeth Malcolm, *Elderly Return Migration from Britain to Ireland: A Preliminary Study*, Report No.44 (National Council for the Elderly, Dublin, 1996), p.49.

with their roots, as in Kevin Henry's case, or it could augment the desire to return to Ireland, the heart of the tradition. A cultural connection was not always enough, even when it included regular visits. Some migrants reached a point in their lives when they considered making homecoming a reality. Roger Sherlock shared a flat with Co. Clare piper Willie Clancy and says of his time in London: 'He wouldn't [have been] there any more than three years altogether because he loved Miltown [Malbay], where he came from. He spoke about nothing else only Miltown. He loved it. His heart and soul was in Miltown. That was the reason why he was only three years in London and he went home to Miltown.' Others, including Roger himself, remained abroad for much longer but eventually decided to return to Ireland. This section analyzes the nature of the return flow and its links to life course events.

Return Migrants: A Demographic Profile

A number of surveys over several decades have attempted to determine how many migrants consider returning and why, an endeavour complicated by the decision's particularly personal logic. In the 1950s folklorist and historian Arnold Schrier examined 'the return tide' from the United States. He focused on marriage as a primary reason, particularly for women, while acknowledging the existence of other motives: poor health, lack of economic success, retirement, nostalgia, or the death of parents in Ireland.[44] In the 1960s John A. Jackson traced 111 migrants from Skibbereen to Britain and found that 62 percent expressed a desire to return, 27 percent did not want to return, and, realistically, 44 percent expected to remain in Britain for the rest of their lives.[45] He acknowledged that the timing of the survey in relation to the individual's life course might affect their answers, but said the differences based on years spent abroad were negligible. More recent studies of Irish people in Britain suggest that between 20 and 50 percent may want to return, with considerable variation based on age, geographic, and socio-economic factors.[46]

[44] Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, pp.130-3.
[45] Jackson, *Report on the Skibbereen Social Survey*, p.39.
[46] A 1988 survey of 100 Irish people over age sixty in Haringey found that 61 percent had at some time considered moving back to Ireland and 51 percent were currently interested. In a 1993-4 study, two-thirds of Liverpool respondents reported wanting to return permanently, compared with 36 percent in Birmingham and 21 percent in Manchester. Winston surveyed 49 older Irish people resident in Britain in 2001 and found that 39 percent would like to return, but only 27 percent both wanted to return and thought it feasible. Malcolm, *Elderly Return Migration*, pp.48-50; Nessa Winston, *The Return of Older Irish Migrants: An Assessment of Needs and Issues* (Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants & The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, Dublin, 2002), pp.24-5.

While David Ralph, Linda Dowling Almeida, and Mary Corcoran have studied return migration from America among the 1980s emigrant generation, no survey encompasses the post-war generation as well.[47] Different age and occupational histories mean fundamental discrepancies exist between the concerns of the two groups.

Irish demographic statistics offer insights into the characteristics of the return flow. The 2006 census showed 374,753 Irish-born people who lived outside the state for one year or more and can therefore be classified as return migrants. They comprised 8.84 percent of the total population, a substantial share.[48] Those born before 1951, and therefore likely to have emigrated by 1970, comprised 28.6 percent of returnees in 1996 and 16.9 percent in 2006.[49] Men and women of this age group were present in almost equal numbers.[50] Figure 5.1 below shows that approximately three-quarters of returnees previously lived in the United Kingdom, unsurprising given that it was the primary destination for Irish migrants since the 1930s. Between nine and ten percent of returnees had lived in the United States.

As the only periods during the last century or more in which Ireland experienced net immigration, scholars tend to focus on return migration in the 1970s and the 1990s to early 2000s.[51] This rests on the assumption that, like emigration, economic factors primarily drive return. However, analysis of quantitative and qualitative evidence presents a more complex picture and emphasises the importance of non-economic reasons.[52] Figure 5.2 illustrates the percentages of returnees usually resident in the Republic of Ireland in 2006 by decade of last taking up residence in

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[47] Linda Dowling Almeida, '"And They Still Haven't Found What They're Looking for": A Survey of the New Irish in New York City', in P. O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History, Heritage, Identity*, vol.1, *Patterns of Migration* (Leicester University Press, London & New York, 1992), pp.196-221; Mary Corcoran, 'The Process of Migration and the Reinvention of Self: The Experiences of Returning Irish Migrants', *Éire-Ireland*, vol.31, nos.1-2 (2002), pp.175-91; Ralph, 'Understanding Home'.

[48] *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4.

[49] *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4, table 26; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1996*, vol.4, table 24. See Appendix 3, table 8 for more detail.

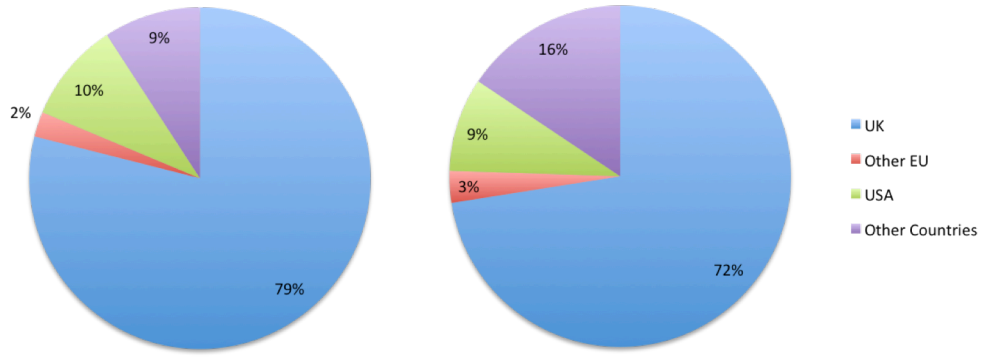
[50] The 1996 census reported 57,778 men and 57,666 women born before 1951 and resident outside Ireland for one year or more. *Census of Population of Ireland, 1996*, vol.4, table 24.

[51] For example, Catríona Ní Laoire states that apart from the 1990s, 'the other period of significant return migration was the 1970s' a position presented in many secondary sources. 'Coming "Home": A Geography of Recent Return Migration to the Republic of Ireland', presented at the 2nd International Population Geographies Conference, St. Andrews (11-14 August 2004).

[52] Enda Delaney, 'Placing Postwar Irish Migration to Britain in a Comparative European Perspective, 1945-1981', in A. Bielenberg (ed.), *The Irish Diaspora*, p.345; Irial Glynn, 'Returnees, Forgotten Foreigners and New Immigrants: Tracing Migratory Movement into Ireland since the Late Nineteenth Century', in Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational Perspectives on Modern Irish History*, p.226.

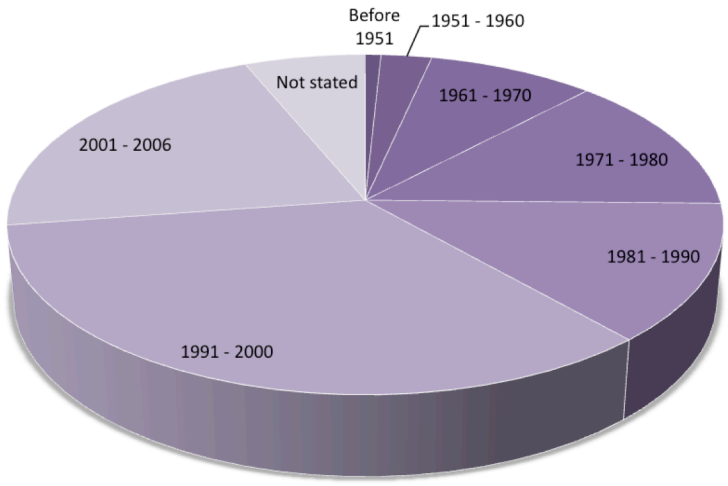
the state. About the same percentage returned in the 1970s and 1980s (13.19 percent and 13.16 percent respectively), which belies the concentration on the former. Though some people who returned in the 1970s could have since re-migrated or passed away, the 1991 and 1996 censuses both show the 1980s had similar or higher numbers of immigrants than the 1970s.[53] Because the 1980s witnessed high levels of emigration, immigration gets overlooked. By far the greatest proportion of migrants returned during the Celtic Tiger: 34.2 percent in the 1990s and 21.1 percent between 2001 and 2006. This shows that while net emigration dominated the twentieth century, return migration has always featured in migration trends.

Figure 5.1: Return migrants born before 1951 by place of previous residence (left: 1996, right: 2006)



Source: *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4, table 26; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1996*, vol.4, table 24.

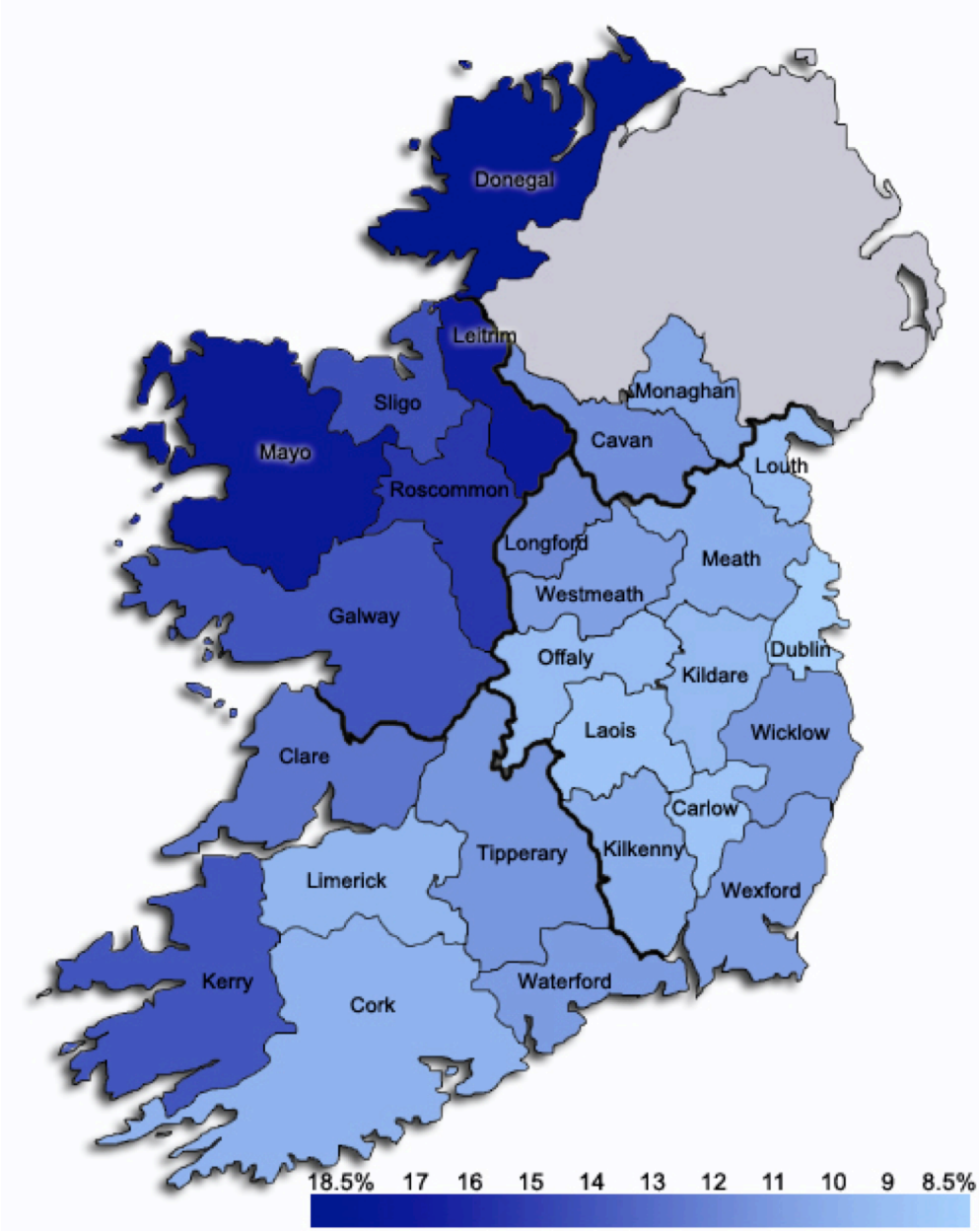
Figure 5.2: Return migrants in 2006 by decade of return



Source: *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4, table 24.

[53] The 1991 census reports show 38.5% of immigrants took up residence in Ireland in the 1980s and 32.8% in the 1970s. The 1996 census reports show 23% and 24% respectively. Not until the 2006 census is it possible to separate the Irish-born from other immigrants by decade. *Census of Population of Ireland, 1991*, vol.8, table 22A; *Census of Population of Ireland, 1996*, vol.4, table 25.

Figure 5.3: Percentage of the population previously resident in the USA or UK for at least one year, by county (2006)



Source: *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4, table 23

While movement from rural Ireland to urban areas abroad characterized emigration historically, the reverse characterizes return migration. Returnees tend to go to their place of birth or a place where they had previous connections.[54] Thus, counties in the west and north that witnessed the highest levels of emigration during the twentieth century also reported the greatest number of returned migrants on the

[54] Malcolm, *Elderly Return Migration from Britain to Ireland*, p.28; Fiona McGrath, 'The Economic, Cultural and Social Impacts of Return Migration to Achill Island', in R. King (ed.), *Contemporary Irish Migration* (Geographical Society of Ireland, Dublin, 1991), p.58.

2006 Census, as the map illustrates (figure 5.3). It closely resembles the map of emigration rates in Chapter 2 (figure 2.3).[55] Jones makes the point that job creation as a result of multinational investment and industrial expansion explains rates of return in some counties, but in others, including Donegal and Mayo, little of that has occurred. In those areas returnees seem drawn by the attraction of rural life and their childhood homes.[56] The map (figure 5.3) shows the number of people usually resident in each county who had previously lived in the USA or UK for at least one year as a percentage of the total population usually resident in that county. Donegal has the highest proportion, at 18.5 percent, and Dublin has the lowest at 8.5 percent (see Appendix 3, table 9 for enumeration by county). The former exemplifies return migrants attraction to 'home' as a local place rather than the nation, and the latter exemplifies an employment-based choice of location. The available data does not separate migrants by birthplace at the county-level, but for the country as a whole, 58 percent of those who reported living previously in the USA or UK were born in Ireland, classifying them as returned migrants. Many others are no doubt spouses or children of those migrants and therefore the products of return migration trends.

Personal Narratives of Return

Who are these people and why did they come back to Ireland? Like emigration, the interaction of multiple external and internal factors could prompt return, 'complicating and obscuring any efforts to establish a taxonomy' of motives.[57] However, in all cases migrants speak of their decisions in personal terms. Whether coming back to Ireland after six months or sixty years, the move relates intimately to the course they saw their lives taking at that time. Their narratives place migrations in context, showing 'a strong association of particular life stages with particular types of places' and opportunities.[58] In their youth, migrants related the cities of Britain and America to an abundance of work and pleasure and rural Ireland with little freedom or prospects. Those who returned after only a short time abroad often did so because of extenuating circumstances such as a job offer or the responsibility of caring for elderly parents. As they grew older and started families,

[55] These maps also bear close resemblance to those of cohort depletion (age 5 to 24) presented in Delaney, *Irish Emigration since 1921*, p.15.
[56] Richard C. Jones, 'Multinational Investment and Return Migration in Ireland in the 1990s– a county-level analysis', *Irish Geography*, vol.32, no.2 (2003), p.160.
[57] Ralph, 'Understanding Home', p.107; McCarthy, *Personal Narratives of Irish and Scottish Migration*, pp.208-11; Hammerton & Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms*, pp.275-7.
[58] Ní Laoire, 'Settling Back?', p.203.

many migrants looked with longing or nostalgia on their youth and associated Ireland with peace, security, and strong social networks. The nation's economic development from the 1960s on enabled some to return and find jobs or comfortably retire to a place with most of the same amenities they enjoyed abroad, but they framed that movement as part of a life-course decision often coinciding with parenthood or retirement.[59]

While economic necessity drove emigration in the first place, earning experience and qualifications abroad could facilitate return. Ben Lennon trained and worked in the garment industry in London for five years before returning to Ireland with his wife and first child in 1954. The economy remained poor at that time and he almost failed to find a job:

> We came back home to Ireland and things were bad. You think they're bad now; it was desperate. I had a brother in Canada, in Montreal, and I decided 'that's where I'm going to go.' Had my passage booked and everything and about a week before I was due to go my mother saw an advert in the paper for a job in Limerick and she said to me 'you should apply for that.' I said, 'I'm tired applying for jobs, they won't answer, they don't even answer it.' She said 'do that one.' And I did. If I hadn't got the job in Limerick I was on my way to go get the boat. That's how near I was to going to Canada. It could've been a wholly different life altogether, you know.

He had already bought passage on a ship and sent his luggage ahead when he got the job.[60] Family members, as in the case of Ben's mother, exerted a powerful influence. Other migrants returned to jobs, but not necessarily to their place of birth or even because of a strong desire to live in Ireland. John Gildea had returned to Leitrim first in 1975, intending to stay, but went back to England for a few years because he had difficulty finding sustained employment. He returned again, this time to Cork, because 'I knew a fellow that had got a job for me to start me off, from Cork. I never left. Stayed here. But when work got scarce here I used to go back to London.' Martin Niland came back because the company he worked for in England transferred him to their new premises in Dublin: 'They had a lot of stuff going on, so they asked me would I come back. That's how I came back. Otherwise I'd be still in England. I didn't have any great ambition to come back, but I did. That was basically it.' Employment facilitated return for these three men under very different circumstances.

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[59] Conlon, '"Germs" in the Heart of the Other',, p.109; Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.69.
[60] Fintan Vallely with Ben Lennon, Nutan Jacques Piraprez & Martin Gaffney, *Ben Lennon: The Tailor's Twist* (FOBL, Dublin, 2011), p.48.



Images 5.6 & 5.7: Businesses owned by returned migrants: Chamberlain Bakery, Mitchelstown and Jimmy O'Brien's pub, Killarney. Photographs by Sara Goek.

In some cases, money rather than qualifications or experience made return possible, allowing the purchase of businesses or farms. After living in New York City for five years Jimmy O'Brien and his wife bought a pub in Killarney (image 5.7). They were not the only ones: historian and folklorist Arnold Schrier noted that 'pubs became the favorite business' of return migrants and 'as late as 1955 it was declared that every bar in Killarney was run by a Yank.'[61] Sean Chamberlain recalls a moment of religious inspiration when he decided return, but in practical terms he could not have done so without the savings he used to buy a business and the support of his brother (who still lived in their hometown of Mitchelstown, Co. Cork) and his wife:

> As I told you, my father was a baker. That's one of the reasons I left Ireland in the first place. I said 'I'm never going to be a baker, Christ, getting up at all hours of the night'. After, I must've been there eighteen years then, my brother Paddy was a baker as well. He wanted to buy the premises where we are now because he had done his apprenticeship. He used to phone me every week 'will we buy it? Will you come back there?' 'No,' I says, 'I'm doing fine'. I was, we were doing well. I was in the Church, in the Catholic Church in Kilburn one Sunday night and there was a priest there from the North of Ireland and he was teaching the congregation to sing the hymns with the small little transistor tape recorder. He said 'now sing the next line after me' and he'd play it, because he couldn't sing himself, so he'd play it on this tape, so it's all come out all squawky and squirrely and after about ten minutes I said, 'f*** this, I'm going home,' just like that. I went back to the flat and said 'Bríd, what do you think, will we go back to Ireland?' 'I thought you'd never say it' she says. So we worked maybe for another six months, saved all our money and we arrived back here. That was 1973 and that was the end of my time in London. For me, that was a glorious time, but of course I was young, which helps.

[61] Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, p.138.

Sean still runs the bakery on Lower Street in Mitchelstown (image 5.6) and lives in the house his family has occupied for six generations.

Chance underlies many of these stories, though it rarely features in taxonomies of reasons for return.[62] Des O'Halloran's return occurred because of an illness:

> I came back I think it was '81, '82. I'd come one Christmas and I was doing a job for this fellow I worked for in London down in Tipperary, brick work on a fireplace. I got sick then. I got double pneumonia and I was in the hospital in Kilkenny for two weeks and doctors said 'you shouldn't work for at least three months'. So I couldn't really afford to go back to London because it would take the money to pay for the flat for three months without work, so I came home then to Inishbofin and maybe only for I got sick I'd never be here. That's the way it happened.

He stayed first because he had no choice and then because he found he could make a living and he settled in Galway city. While Ben Lennon, John Gildea, and Jimmy O'Brien wanted to return to Ireland, Sean Chamberlain did not until a sudden moment of inspiration, and Martin Niland appeared indifferent. All suggested that the final decision depended on the convergence of employment opportunities, support of family, friends, or spouses, and the right timing.

Obligations or ties to family could prompt or hinder return: migrants' decision-making processes never took place in isolation.[63] Madge Ahern says she loved New York and planned to go to San Francisco, but 'then my father got sick and I remember my mother kept writing to me. He died. I came home when he died. But my mother kept writing to me to come home, that I was out there all alone and all the rest of it.'[64] As much as migrants in her position may have wanted to help their families and be near them, they felt torn between individual desires and familial obligations.[65] Seán Ó Ciarán wrote of how a summer visit to his parents in Mayo led to internal conflict:

> I felt that night that I had missed out a lot on having been away from home. I felt sorry for my father, hacked and hard and weather-beaten… Should not I, his son, be at home with him as he had been with his father, helping him now when he was getting older, taking some of the load off his back,

[62] Ralph does list 'spontaneous decisions' as a reason for return ('Understandings of Home', p.108). Hammerton and Thomson do not account for chance or spontaneity, unless under the 'miscellaneous factors' category. *Ten Pound Poms*, p.277.
[63] Caitríona Ní Laoire, 'The "Green Green Grass of Home"? Return Migration to Rural Ireland', *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol.23, no.3 (July 2007), p.336.
[64] Madge Ahern, interview with Margaret Kearns, 29 Nov. 2001, WOHP UCC.
[65] Breda Gray's research addresses ways in which women negotiated a desire for independence or self-actualization with familial obligations in their decisions to emigrate and return. *Women and the Irish Diaspora*, pp.98, 101.

> making things a bit easier for him? That I knew was what he had hoped for from me but I had not lived up to his expectations. On the other hand did I not have the right to be my own man, to go my own road, make my own way in the world, and in time to marry and set up a home of my own, independent of my parents? It was as if I was being pulled in opposite directions, torn between two feelings.[66]

He returned to Mayo about six months later, but after two years he left for Scotland again. In the end, the need to make a living trumped other factors. This type of return worked only when combined with economic stability.

Starting their own families figures prominently in migrants' accounts of reasons for return. Ní Laoire's research indicates that they tend to idealize their own childhoods. Their narratives construct rural Ireland as a good place to bring up children, with strong values of community and family, a finding that my oral histories support.[67] Packie Browne and his wife returned because they wanted to raise their children in Ireland: 'We came back in '82. 'Twas a kind of a toss up, if we hadn't come at that time the kids would be too old, so we had to make a break or stay put. I'm happy that we did come back. I think the kids were happy as well because they reckon they got a better education here that they would've got in England. How true that is, I don't know.' Packie acknowledges that he grew up with few amenities or opportunities for education, but also that the country changed in the years of his absence. Kevin and Noreene McDermott's reasoning process emphasized their children's quality of life, rather than education specifically. Kevin took early retirement from the London fire service and recalls:

> We had two boys come along, and we said, 'let's go back to Ireland and rear these two boys there' because all my family and her family have reared kids over there [in England] and although though they have everything they really have a poor quality of life as opposed to living in Ireland. So we decided yeah, to hell, her mother and father were still alive at the time in Cork, so that was a connection, and her brother still lives in Cork, so although I was the only one who came back out of my lot. We took the plunge and came back.

Though he says they had a 'nice house' in the London suburbs, they wanted more space and less traffic. They chose to settle in Wexford, though Noreene comes from Cork and Kevin from Cavan. For those who stayed in Britain or America to raise

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[66] Ó Ciaráin, *Farewell to Mayo*, pp.180-1.

[67] Ní Laoire, 'The "Green Green Grass of Home"?', p.338; Ní Laoire, 'Narratives of "Innocent Irish Childhoods", p.1258; Bronwen Walter, Breda Gray, Linda Almeida Dowling & Sarah Morgan, 'A Study of the Existing Sources of Information and Analysis about Irish Emigrants and Irish Communities Abroad' (Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, 2002), p.19.

their families, as they aged they may have wanted to return to Ireland themselves but felt they had too much to lose by leaving their children or grandchildren behind.[68]

For migrants of the post-war generation who returned more recently, the movement generally coincided with retirement. They use polarized constructions of 'home' (rural Ireland) versus 'away' (urban England) as a contributing factor in the decision. England appears as a place of fast-paced life, immorality, and danger, whereas Ireland represents a safe haven associated with family, peace and a relaxed pace of life.[69] The same perceptions of Ireland largely hold true for migrants who settled in the United States, but images of the two countries are not polarized to the same extent. Martin Treacy recalls, 'Wembley was a beautiful place when I moved out there, a lovely place, but it went down to hell. All these other crowd moved in and bought houses in there… There were young lads on the corners and you'd be getting mugged and knifed. It went that way and I said "to hell with this and I'm retiring and getting out".'[70] Martin and Teresa McMahon also found the Irish community in England gradually disappearing, taking away their support network and audience: 'our work started to go. All the Irish had come back here in their droves and between coming back here when the boom was on, the Celtic Tiger, that and unfortunately old people weren't able to go out any more and some of them passed away. It was a combination. We thought we'd come and give it a try here.' Though settled and happy in London, they were happy only within the Irish community, which aged and dispersed, taking with it their sense of belonging.

Perceptions of danger and a loss of community contrast sharply with memories of life in Ireland when, Martin McMahon reminisces, 'back in the olden days, say a farmer that was inside the fence, you might be walking by, he'd stop, you'd stop, you could be chatting for a half an hour' and 'you shared everything with your neighbour, potatoes and milk, even water'. The McMahons spoke about the poverty of their childhoods, so this feeling represents a selective nostalgia, focusing on the positive aspects of Irish society.[71] Danny Meehan's account of return in 2007 features similar ideas:

> Well, when I was about sixty-seven work got harder and various things sort of I thought… The reason I decided to come, because I used to come back

[68] Kathleen, Reminiscences collection, AIB LMU; Margaret O'Toole, Reminiscences collection, AIB LMU.
[69] Ní Laoire, 'The "Green Green Grass of Home"?', p.337.
[70] Bridie Collins tells a similar story in Browner, *Coming Home*, p.203.
[71] Leavey et al., 'Older Irish Migrants Living in London', p.776.

> here two or three times a year and stay in a hotel. So I was walking up past Anderson's Estate Agents one day and there was a little cottage for sale. I thought, 'that'll be a nice little place for a holiday cottage,' so I went in and I bought it. I just bought it just in the spur of the moment. I never thought I'd come back to live in it, you see. But then I came back the following April and I decided, this is great – an acre of ground, nice and quiet, low maintenance, old-fashioned… It's just right and it's surrounded by little birds and stuff. I thought I'm not going to bother going back. While I did go back and squared up my affairs and came back and I'm still above ground, just about. It's great. It's too quiet in ways for me, because I'm still wild. I'm still a very very high strung, wild character and that's the way I am, I can't change. But it's nice, peacefulness soaks into me now and again and it's good for you. You can feel yourself slowly recovering.

Danny contrasts the 'quiet' of Donegal with his own 'wild' nature, not with urban Britain. In doing so he stresses that he enjoyed his lifestyle in London and returned not because of dissatisfaction, but as part of a gradual process of retirement and 'recovery'. These narratives emphasize the safe, peaceful, and communal qualities – whether real or imagined – that make Ireland an ideal place for retirement, in contrast to the fast-pace and individualism of urban life abroad. Migrants return in a quest 'for something which, for want of a better word, we can call community'.[72]

For musicians in particular, the desire to be surrounded by Irish culture could add to the appeal of return.[73] Johnny Connolly grew up in the Connemara Gaeltacht and migrated to Preston, Lancashire, where his first two children were born. He says of the family's decision to return,

> There was a job at home at the time and I think my wife anyway, even though she didn't speak the Irish herself, she wanted the kids to have it, so we decided to come home and she put them to an Irish school and that they would pick up the language better than in England. Because there was a mixture in England, between English and Irish. We used to talk a bit of English and then go into the Irish and it wouldn't have been, like it's only Irish that we learned ourselves when we were growing up.

Johnny notes with pride that his three children all speak fluent Irish (two are schoolteachers and teach through Irish) and his son Johnny Óg is an accomplished accordion player, all of which vindicates the decision to return. Moving back to Connemara also meant that the children grew up near their grandparents. While a life course event – having children – prompted consideration of return, wanting them speak Irish and grow up surrounded by the language and culture relates more closely to a desire to feel 'at home' than to a particular event. Eamon Flynn returned in 2006

[72] Mary Corcoran, quoted in Walter, et al., 'A Study of the Existing Sources of Information', p.20.
[73] In Winston's study, fourteen percent of older Irish-born people living in Britain cited the fact that they 'missed Irish culture and music' as a reason for potential return. Winston, *The Return of Older Irish Migrants*, p.24.

after his retirement and cited music as his primary reason, though in personal rather than familial terms: 'I wanted to meet some of the younger musicians before I got too old. My wife can't retire for another couple years, she'll be sixty this year; she's a schoolteacher. I said I'd hold the fort 'til she gets here.' His return temporarily separated him from his American wife, but it has provided him access to a deeper level of cultural fulfilment than was available where they lived in Vermont.

These stories share an over-arching theme that unites them despite their links to different life course events: their contingency. They depend on the confluence of personal, familial, societal, and economic factors in Ireland and Britain or America. In some cases, return seems almost accidental: Ben Lennon would have left again for Canada had his mother not encouraged him to apply for a job she saw advertised; Sean Chamberlain got fed up with the church choir one day, which prompted him to take his brother's offer of setting up a business together; Danny Meehan bought a house on impulse and then decided it would make a nice place for his retirement. The Browne and McDermott families felt Ireland offered their children the best quality of life and education and they 'took the plunge', enabled by economic circumstances. Martin Treacy and Martin and Teresa McMahon felt attracted by the idea of returning 'home' to Ireland, but also pushed out by changes to their communities in England. Ní Laoire argues, 'the most crucial aspect of timing is the point of intersection between an individual's life and wider historical or contextual forces – the relationship between biography and context'.[74] Return migration occurs when the *desire* (or at least willingness) to live in Ireland coincides with the *opportunity* and in personal narratives, non-economic motives come to the fore.

IV. Settling Back

Return migration has the potential to unite a deep-rooted sense of 'home' with a physical place. Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin left for England at the age of sixteen and lived and worked many places there and in the US before returning to his native Connemara in 2004. He wanted to see more of the country that gave him his language, songs, and identity:

> Well, it was always in the back of my mind that I was going to return. Every morning I woke up and I was fierce happy there and worked and always had money and plenty of it and jobs and everything and it was always in the back of my mind… I seen a lot of countries but I hadn't seen much of

[74] Ní Laoire, '"Settling Back"?', p.199; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.275.

> Ireland but what I seen off the train traveling from Galway to Dublin. I said I'd never rest my bones 'til I'd lay my foot in every county in Ireland. I have done that now, so I'm pretty pleased.

While Jimmy found what he sought, others, confronted with realities they might not have considered before the move, felt disillusioned with life in Ireland. Ní Laoire suggests 'return migration for them, on the one hand, represents the fulfilment of the classic emigrant dream of returning home. However, simultaneously, it involves migration to a place that may be in many ways strange to them.'[75] While holding onto their Irish identity and transnational connections had great importance for many migrants abroad, the process of migration changed them as individuals.[76] Some had nostalgic or unrealistic expectations of life in Ireland and the way they imagined 'home' did not necessarily match the reality.

The experience of return could prove as disorienting and difficult as the original departure, especially for elderly people. Gmelch found that among returned migrants in the 1970s many felt disappointed and the longer the individual had lived abroad, the more problems he or she tended to express.[77] McGrath reached similar conclusions in her study of returned migrants on Achill Island and discovered that they often found fault with things in Ireland, comparing it to life abroad and creating mental barriers to readjustment.[78] Sometimes challenges pertained to the differences between urban and rural life, other times to age, but many related to the simple fact that Ireland has changed a great deal since the 1950s. Technology, the expansion of industry, and government investment in infrastructure contributed to a vast rise in standards of living, evident from the 1960s, but they also altered ways of life.[79] Jerry Lynch comments on developments in education and the mechanization of agriculture and industry, saying that between his youth and the present day 'I have seen the greatest transformation in just about every conceivable thing that you can think of here in Ireland'. The changes made return possible, while also putting 'at risk the

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[75] Ní Laoire, 'The "Green Green Grass of Home"', p.332; Ralph, '"Home Is Where the Heart Is?"', p.183.
[76] 85 percent of Gmelch's respondents felt they were different because of time spent abroad and 70 percent believe they were 'broader in outlook' because of those experiences. This could lead to conflict with the attitudes of local people who had never left. George Gmelch, 'The Readjustment of Return Migrants in Western Ireland', in R. King (ed.), *Return Migration and Regional Economic Problems* (Croom Helm, Beckenham, Kent, 1986), p.159.
[77] Gmelch, 'The Readjustment of Return Migrants in Western Ireland', pp.156-9; Malcolm, *Elderly Return Migration from Britain to Ireland*, pp.29, 108.
[78] McGrath, 'The Economic, Social and Cultural Impacts of Return Migration to Achill Island'.
[79] Bielenberg & Ryan, *An Economic History of Ireland since Independence*, p.189.

kind of lifestyle that the returning emigrants covet'.[80] Packie Manus Byrne sums up the contradiction as he perceived it in Donegal: 'Times have changed a lot – probably in many ways it is for the better. Financially people are better off. But the same friendship or the same tenderness towards each other is not to be found no more. Everything got a bit commercial.'[81] Ireland's modernization meant that returnees could expect most of the same conveniences and services as in Britain or America, and while they valued those changes, they held onto idyllic visions of rural life and lamented the end of the days of the 'chat on the side of the road'.[82]

Oral histories point to the importance of sociability in aiding re-adjustment and the dangers of loneliness, a conclusion that social science research supports.[83] Martin Treacy returned to live near his birthplace in east Galway in 1994 and recalls: 'It took me a while to settle here. I still meet a lot of people around here, young fellows that grew up since I left and I don't know who they are! They speak to you, call your name, but I don't know who the hell they are. The young lads grew up since I left and I don't know them.' This is another example of the gulf between expectations and reality, because many migrants had lived with relative anonymity in urban environments, but upon return to their home place others 'knew' them and they felt they knew no one.[84] Martin left England because the neighbourhood where he lived changed and he may have expected to return to a tight-knit rural community. However, he came up against the paradox of being both an 'insider' and 'outsider', a 'local' and yet a 'stranger' because of his time abroad.[85] At the time of the interview, more than ten years since his return, he still seemed unsettled in that community. Vince O'Halloran, when asked if he considered moving back to Ireland from London said, 'I like to go there for a holiday… I still have a good time there when I go there. Of course the old people that were there when I left, they're all, most of them are gone. The younger people I don't know, only if somebody tells me who they are.'

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[80] Corcoran, 'The Process of Migration and the Reinvention of Self', pp.190-91.
[81] Byrne, *Recollections of a Donegal Man*, p.207.
[82] Martin McMahon, interview with the author, 6 Dec. 2010.
[83] Alan Barrett & Irene Mosca, 'Social Isolation, Loneliness and Return Migration: Evidence from Older Irish Adults', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.39, no.10 (2013), pp.1659-77; Gmelch, "The Readjustment of Return Migrants in Western Ireland," p.164.
[84] Ní Laoire, 'The "Green Green Grass of Home"?', pp.340-1.
[85] Caitríona Ní Laoire, 'Complicating Host-Newcomer Dualisms: Irish Return Migrants as Home-Comers or Newcomers?', *Translocations: Migration and Social Change*, vol.4, no.1 (Winter 2008), pp.39-41; Ralph & Staeheli, 'Home and Migration', p.523. This experience is not unique to the Irish: Deianira Ganga, 'Reinventing the Myth of Return: Older Italians in Nottingham', in Burrell & Panayi (eds.), *Histories and Memories*, p.125.

'Home' is about knowing people and others knowing you as well as about place. Narratives like these highlight the contradiction between Irish government rhetoric of diasporic inclusion and the reality of subtle exclusion: 'return migrants are expected to fit in unproblematically, based on their Irishness, and their experiences of difference are denied, suggesting that it is considered impossible to be both fully Irish and a migrant.'[86] While this experience recurs across different generations of migrants and their descendants, for older people without immediate family in Ireland it can be particularly trying. They feel like 'strangers' living 'in the middle of nowhere' and that sense of isolation can prove difficult to negotiate.[87]

Mary Barrett and her husband Patrick (Packy) Dyer returned with the assistance of the Safe Home Programme and she says, 'when you get older it's not easy to make new friends. And it's harder to make friends here. Everything is harder; when you move here it's different altogether. Everything is different, everything; everything seems different.'[88] However, Packy is a musician and this has helped them adjust. Mary says they 'have a nice social life. That makes a difference too. You see Packy being a musician takes us out a good bit. He plays the flute and he plays all over the place… You see when you're a musician you get out a lot more and you get to know more people.' Packy agrees: 'it's the music that really keeps me going here. I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have that.'[89] Musicians' social lives developed in the same way as when they first emigrated, through networks of shared cultural practice. When asked whether Ireland seemed different coming back in 2007, Eamon Flynn responded, 'no, because I kept in touch. The music kept me in touch all the time. It wasn't like I was coming back and didn't know anyone.' Danny Meehan likewise maintains an active musical life, regularly attending and participating in sessions, festivals, and concerts. Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin says that he settled back better once he travelled around and 'met all kinds of great musicians here in Ireland, young and old'.[90] Even for those who do not have close family or friends in Ireland, traditional music helps them establish new relationships.

Accordion player Martin Mulhaire migrated from Eyrecourt, Co. Galway in 1958 and settled in New York City with his wife. He had a lot of trouble getting used

[86] Ní Laoire, 'Complicating Host-Newcomer Dualisms', p.41.
[87] Martin McMahon, interview with the author, 6 Dec. 2010.
[88] In Browner, *Coming Home*, p.154. The Safe Home Programme is a registered charity that provides migrants with information and support for returning to Ireland.
[89] In Browner, *Coming Home*, pp.157-8, p.164.
[90] Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin, personal communication with the author, 8 July 2011.

to America at first and for a time stopped playing Irish music because it made him too homesick. His story sums up the complexity of migrants' relationships to their birthplace and the challenge return poses:

> I was back in 1976, yes, with intentions of settling in Ireland… I was in a position where I said well, if I'm ever going to move, this is the time, I have to do it now. I guess against my better judgment I did decide and sold everything and moved back to Ireland and tried it out and I was very very happy there, but it wasn't the answer to everything, so I didn't stay… There is problems in the transition *because even though you don't realize it yourself you have become Americanized*, whatever that word means, to a certain extent. *You have become too used to a way of life*, a way of travel, even just the handling of the currency… That's just one instance, but little things that you find that you've changed more than you realized. Plus the people there have changed: they have moved into the twentieth century. Life is very different for kids in Ireland today compared to what it was for me. We were very rural people, we had very little, everybody had pretty much the same. Now there's really no difference in living there and living here, kids are as well off, maybe better off, than the kids in this country, they have everything.

Mick Moloney, the interviewer, asked if that wouldn't make it easier to adjust and Mulhaire responded,

> Well in that respect it would *except that wasn't the Ireland that I was seeking*. I guess what I was looking for was more or less the Ireland I had left. But that had progressed too, that had changed too. *In a sense I didn't find what I was [looking for]. They say no man can ever go home*… So back to New York again. With a slightly different outlook maybe, you know, of putting New York in proper perspective for the first time and saying well, this is a good country, this country has been good, which it has been good to me and there's no reason why I can't have my Irish heritage here and play my tunes here just like if I was in Ireland. And that was the first time after I had been to Ireland and lived there and come back here that I really started getting back into the traditional scene again and that I could listen to Irish music and not feel so broken up about it.[91]

Like Martin, many migrants feel that Ireland, or a specific place in Ireland, is home, but return forces them to confront what that really means.[92] The experience showed him that migration had changed him subconsciously. He returned to Ireland happy to see that it had 'moved into the twentieth century' and out of the poverty he witnessed growing up, but eventually realized that the place he sought no longer existed: 'no man can ever go home.' The realization drove him to re-migrate. It also allowed him to come to terms with life in New York and rediscover his love of traditional music. Through music he reconnected with the Ireland that he called home. Being at home takes much more than physical presence in a place: it is a dynamic feeling of

[91] Emphasis added. Martin Mulhaire, interview with Mick Moloney, 5 Dec. 1981, Mick Moloney Collection, AIA NYU.
[92] Ní Laoire, 'Complicating Host-Newcomer Dualisms', p.38.

belonging constructed through culture. Narratives of return and ‘settling back’ hold significance equal to those of emigration, because individuals evaluate their pasts through the light of the present. For migrants, whether happy or disillusioned with contemporary Ireland, their imagination of ‘home’ and the traditional music that embodies it remain a touchstone for their identity, culture, and values.

Conclusion

Immediately following an anecdote about punishment in primary school, Kevin Henry reflected, 'you never think of the sad things; you always think of the good things. There was good things too. Made men out of us at a young age to go out and hustle for a living.' In this brief statement he recognizes the partiality of memory and acknowledges that his youth in Ireland and subsequent departure shaped his views. Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin spoke of how the Irishmen he knew in England had all come from poor backgrounds and they found themselves hard at work in an unfamiliar place; 'we survived and here we are… I'm not saying it was a gravy train of life, but we survived it anyhow.' Jimmy's use of 'we' highlights the fact that he identified with others who shared similar experiences. Not only did they 'survive', migration changed them. As Teresa McMahon said, 'you just can't get back to the way you were.' These three quotations tie together the themes of my dissertation: the importance of considering Ireland in any study of Irish migration, the fluid nature of memory, the ways living and working conditions influenced personal and collective identities, and migration's effect on individuals and how they perceived themselves.

Oral histories contain rich detail that allows us to 'hear' a world that no longer exists. While indebted to the work of previous scholars who collected detailed information on Irish musical practices in Britain and America,[1] my own research has given greater prominence to migrant musicians' voices and personal experiences and their historical contexts. When collected and used with respect for their unique nature, oral histories are sources of feelings, values, and interpretations, as well as of facts. Analyzing personal narratives draws attention to the construction of memories and threads of meaning beneath their surface. Interviewees may never say words like 'identity' or 'class' aloud, but the concepts are present nonetheless. Understandings of them originated in experiences in Ireland and persisted in their places of settlement, both part of a whole life story. Attention to biographical detail complements an examination of migration to the United States and Great Britain that exposes similarities and differences resulting from specific local, geographical, and

[1] Gedutis, *See You at the Hall*; Hall, 'Irish Music and Dance in London'; McCullough, 'Irish Music in Chicago'; Moloney, 'Irish Music in America'.

historical circumstances. The sources highlight the tensions between holding on to tradition and adjusting to a new environment. I have argued that migrants were neither 'uprooted' nor 'transplanted'; they 'acclimatized', drawing dynamically upon the cultural practices of homeland and host country.

Musicians and singers played a central role in the process of identity formation and its reproduction. They articulated it through their music, felt it reaffirmed or challenged through audience reactions, and, many years later, reflected on it in their oral histories. In Irish historical scholarship music has long remained absent or relegated to passing references. As Martin Dowling writes, it has been left 'subject to the largely ahistorical discipline of ethnomusicology', which 'reinforces the popular understanding that such music is timeless, unchanging and "ancient"', divorcing it from its historical and social contexts.[2] While Dowling's work stresses music's place in the construction of national identities, the key finding of my research is that its role extends beyond the nation and it can also be studied 'from below'. Social historians over the last several decades have revised our understanding of previously marginalized subjects including women's lives, the working class, health, and criminality through fresh interpretations of existing sources and the creation of new sources using oral history methods. Like those topics, music constituted an integral part of everyday lives, yet one often taken for granted. Training a microscope on it, we see evidence of the dynamic process of acclimatization across space and time. In Ireland, traditional music gradually absorbed new technologies and outside influences, reflecting the country's modernization and globalization over the twentieth century. In Britain and America, migrants adapted existing urban spaces in ways that enabled them to create communities bearing hallmarks of those they had left behind, including tight social networks and mutual assistance. These characteristics largely survived the move from the semi-private and self-contained rural community to the semi-public and ethnic-dominated commercial venue. Musicians formed their own networks and in traditional music their audiences found a familiar soundscape, an aural link to the land of their birth enacted within their new place of residence.

[2] Dowling, *Traditional Music and Irish Society*, p.2; Patrick O'Sullivan, *The Irish World Wide: History, Heritage, Identity*, vol.3, *The Creative Migrant* (Leicester University Press, London & New York, 1994), p.17.

As a part of the 'totality' of everyday life, music was inseparable from post-war migrants' experiences of work, mobility, and settlement.[3] Whether to escape poor living conditions or relax with friends, commercial pubs and dance halls inadvertently became ethnic community centres. Those unwilling to settle could stop in for a night and meet others from the same county or in the same line of work. Those who wanted to put down roots in their new place of residence could find potential spouses or people who knew of better work opportunities. As a backdrop to it all, music and a comradeship born from the mutual experience of displacement connected them to Ireland and to others who shared similar backgrounds and values. Venues that featured Irish music thus provided liminal spaces for the negotiation of ethnicity. Traditional music, in all its forms, sheds light on processes of adaptation to life in a new country and the formation of new identities.

This relates to the frameworks of transnational and comparative history that underpin my research. While the historiography often focuses on the sending and receiving societies separately, I demonstrate that transnational ties linked Ireland and her diaspora in both physical and imaginary ways. People moved back and forth across geographical borders, wrote letters, and maintained cultural connections through music and dancing. Despite the sheer variety of individual stories and the fact that on the surface it appears that migrants in Britain and America worked in similar types of occupations and socialized in the same sorts of venues, comparative history draws attention to the differences in how they negotiated working and living conditions and cultural practices. I have focused on the themes of *migration, work, social life,* and *ethnic and cultural identity* within the geographical and chronological confines of each chapter. I will now consider each in turn to illuminate broader trends.

Chapters 2 and 5 foreground the ways people speak of migration in the context of their life stories. Personal narratives challenge attempts to create taxonomies or theories that can fully explain the process. Instead, in the cases of both emigration and return, multiple rationales intertwine, emerging from a complex nexus of personal and societal circumstances. These include economic factors, familial needs, the influence of friends or romantic partners, the existence of transnational social networks, and the desire for adventure. In choosing to go to

[3] Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol.1, p.42.

America or Britain, preconceptions of those nations and their Irish populations also feature. Compared to Ireland, both were associated with greater job opportunities, but America carried a more favourable image, derived from historic perspectives and Hollywood propaganda. Nonetheless, proximity and lower travel costs meant that the majority of post-war migrants went to Britain. While migration studies generally concern themselves with either emigration or immigration, return migration to Ireland has always featured in its population flows, reinforcing ties between Ireland and her diaspora.[4] When considering return, migrants had to contend with their memories – positive and negative – and the challenges of resettling. Those who came back confronted a reality that did not necessarily correspond to reminiscences of their youth. In telling their life stories, interviewees see the past through the lens of the present and aim to account for it. Individual case studies – such as those of Jimmy O'Brien and Martin and Teresa McMahon in Chapter 2 – highlight how they make sense of their life courses.

Consideration of migrants' work experiences is essential to their narratives and our understanding of their social lives and identities. A lack of sufficient full-time employment in Ireland constituted a primary factor in decisions to emigrate in the post-war era. Once abroad, personal testimonies variously construct workplaces as Irish spaces and sites of encounter with the host population and other ethnic groups. They were also gendered spaces. Irishmen labouring 'on the buildings' in Britain drew on the mythology of the navvy and describe a homosocial milieu inhabited by others of similar origins. By contrast, in America, while male migrants also worked in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations, their narratives point more to the significance of the workplace as a site of encounter with different ethnic groups. In both the US and Britain, women gravitated towards suitably feminine and respectable occupations, particularly clerical work and health services. This differentiated them from their predecessors, who had concentrated in domestic service, and it led them to more active engagement with the host society and upward social mobility. For these young Irish men and women, the work often brought them their first independent paycheques, which (after sending a contribution 'home') they joyously spent on new suits or dresses, perfect for a night out dancing.

[4] Glynn, 'Returnees, Forgotten Foreigners and New Immigrants', pp.224-5.

Preoccupation with work and associational culture in historical scholarship – driven by the availability of documentary records – has obscured other experiences.[5] Music was a dimension of informal popular culture that large swathes of the population could relate to in its varied iterations. It thus had a central place in the construction of a shared identity. However, the shapes it took as it developed were contingent upon local contexts and settlement patterns. While traditional music flourished in private homes in Ireland and continued to do so in America, in Britain difficult working and living conditions forced it into commercial venues. In London, pubs and dance halls co-existed and flourished in the 1950s and '60s, while in New York, Chicago, and Boston music sessions in pubs developed from the 1960s onwards as the dance halls declined. Even in those cities significant differences existed: Boston proportionally had the largest and most concentrated Irish population in the 1950s and consequently was perceived as having the most vibrant ethnic social scene, while in New York and Chicago musicians felt the scene lagged compared to its earlier heydays. London, by contrast, received far larger numbers of young Irish migrants than any destination in the United States in the post-war era. It had both the critical mass *and* convenient public transport system needed to support large numbers of Irish social venues. In addition, while many migrants in this period hoped the move to Britain might prove temporary, or at least would allow for frequent visits back to Ireland, migration to America had an air of greater permanence about it. Thus, migrants in Britain may have more willingly gone out to 'live the high life' and enjoy the 'craic' rather than settling down. In both countries, a few musicians and singers also moved between Irish traditional music and the on-going folk revival, itself a transnational phenomenon. It influenced the evolution of the public image of Irish music from associations with rural poverty and backwardness to something at once authentic and even trendy. Traditional music (though mixed with other genres) served as a backdrop for the development of Irish migrant communities.

The use of comparative methods draws attention to differences on national and regional levels. Ethnic identity has generally received less consideration in studies of migrants in Britain than in the United States, but perhaps this is an

[5] Work, religion, and ethnic associations are the primary focal points of many major texts in the field, including: Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America*; Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*; Kenny, *The American Irish*; and McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America*.

oversight.[6] Certainly the Irish in Britain tended not to wear their badge of ethnicity so openly and prejudices against them lingered longer there. In a review essay that examines multiple volumes of Irish diaspora scholarship, David Noel Doyle argues that the class system contributed to this key difference. For those who achieved upward social mobility 'America allowed such a risen class to remain still "Irish," whereas in Britain such mobility, where it occurred, was at the price of absorption and invisibility'.[7] The maturation of Irish-American identity that Kennedy's presidency symbolized and the contrasting persistence of anti-Irish discrimination in Britain suggest that this trend persisted into and beyond the 1960s. The situation had more nuances than the narrative of assimilation versus prejudice allows, but nonetheless these trajectories point to the diversity that Doyle sees within the Irish diaspora, despite the rhetoric of cohesion (or the singular definite article) often used in reference to it. As Chapters 3 and 4 have shown, migrants in both Britain and America participated in Irish social and cultural life, demonstrating an active interest in cultivating an ethnic identity. However, class differences persisted in interpretations of that identity and local circumstances influenced the ways in which their communities developed.

The process of migration itself could bring about awareness of ethnicity. For musicians in Ireland, the identification of themselves and their music as *Irish* never came into question, but suddenly in another country it had more salience. Larry Reynolds said, 'I believe that I became more of an Irishman than I was, because you never thought of it when you were home.' If it was ever in doubt he insisted, 'I was always very quick since I came here to let someone know, if I met them, that I was Irish. And proud of it. A lot of people felt that way.'[8] Of course, not all made that choice and multiple identities are always possible, so they may also have ascribed to aspects of American-ness or British-ness. Cultural practices serve as a marker of identity, because 'culture provides the content and meaning of ethnicity' and is constructed in much the same way.[9] In early twentieth-century Ireland traditional music – despite its presence as a national symbol – remained largely within the rural

[6] Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison', p.136.
[7] David Noel Doyle, 'Cohesion and Diversity in the Irish Diaspora', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol.31, no.123 (May 1999), p.433. He makes the same argument in another review essay: 'Small Differences? The Study of the Irish in the United States and Britain', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol.29, no.113 (May 1994), p.116.
[8] Quoted in Gedutis, *See You at the Hall*, p.77.
[9] Nagel, 'Constructing Ethnicity', p.162.

small-farming and labouring class, who played and danced to it within the confines of private homes and later parish halls. Outside that group, it was stigmatized or sanitized to suit middle-class social mores. In urban Britain and America it moved into the public realm, first within the confines of the ethnic group and later (with the help of the folk revival) to wider audiences. Many of those who had previously looked down upon traditional music came to accept it as part of their identity. Its rising public profile meant that by choosing to go to dance halls and pubs run by Irish businessmen, marketed at an Irish audience, featuring Irish music and dances, migrants ascribed to a certain sense of 'Irishness,' whether or not they did so in other areas of their lives.

What implications, then, does my research have for Irish migration studies, cultural history, and transnationalism? First, it is significant because it demonstrates how music contributes to a more holistic understanding of migrants' lives and deserves a place in the study of cultural history. While the historiography of Irish migration has remained preoccupied with formal social structures, examination of recreation and the 'culture of everyday life' allows us to see migrants' agency in their expressions of individual and collective identities. The same methodologies could be extended to other time periods, places, migrant groups, or multi-generational ethnic groups. Second, considering transnational ties between Ireland and locations in the diaspora, the differences between them, and their individual iterations illuminates the contingencies of historical experience. Ordinary people lived lives that extended across national borders through personal and cultural connections and, in a variety of ways, Ireland remained a touchstone for their identities even as they changed over time. Musicians particularly continued to see Ireland as the wellspring of their tradition, even as they worked to ensure its presence and persistence in their new places of residence. Finally, oral histories and music expand how we can 'hear' the past. Through oral history and music we hear the sounds of the Irish rural community and the ways it was reimagined in urban settings abroad. Migrants' voices convey the tensions that arose from their experiences: guilt and excitement, loneliness and camaraderie, loss and hope. They capture information that has gone unrecorded in other sources and, more importantly, they engage with its meanings in personal and collective terms. As the quotations from Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin, Kevin Henry, and Teresa McMahon at the

beginning of the conclusion imply, the stories they tell encompass all the aspects of life that have influenced the people they are today.

Over the course of the twentieth century traditional music gradually moved from private homes in rural Ireland to public venues in urban centres abroad and back again. Céilí dances and regular pub sessions developed in London's Irish community and spread from there. Recordings and print collections made in America winged their way back across the Atlantic to influence the traditional canon. Innovations linked to the folk revival in the US and Britain gave the music new audiences and raised its status in Ireland and abroad. This shifting of cultural categories and the ideologies that produced them emerged from transnational ties and circulations. While migrants initially reproduced attitudes derived from class distinctions in Ireland and reinforced by established diasporic communities, they also had to confront and negotiate the meaning of their Irishness on their own terms. In the process, traditional music emerged in multiple venues and contexts as a tangible expression of ethnic identity that they now felt more able and willing to appreciate. Music gave that identity a particularly transnational form as it drew on the cultural practices of their youth that were shaped to suit its new settings in Britain and America. The diaspora thus provided an important milieu for not only the survival of the tradition, but its reinvention. When Irish migrants gathered in The Favourite in Holloway, north London on Sunday afternoons in the late 1960s, the setting and the music evoked both the world they had left and the one they now lived in. When these men and women bid 'Farewell to Erin' they did not part from it entirely; although they left the past behind, they remained connected to it through their memories and culture.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interviewee Biographies

John Bowe (b.1945)
Accordion player John Bowe comes from Birr, Co. Offaly. He has lived in London since 1965, but he first visited the city in 1962 with the Aughrim Slopes Céilí Band. He won the senior All-Ireland accordion competition in 1963. In London he played in many pubs and dance halls and he also toured Ireland and America for Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.

Patrick (Packie) Browne (b.1944)
Packie Browne comes from the village of Ballyduff, Co. Kerry. He migrated to England in 1964, living in London first for ten years where he worked and regularly attended dances at the Galtymore Dance Hall in Cricklewood. He has always had an interest in traditional singing and when he moved to Luton he became involved in organizing a local branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. He and his family returned to live in Ballyduff in 1982 and he continues to play an active role in CCÉ and music sessions in the area.

Kevin Burke (b.1950)
Born in London to parents from Sligo, Kevin Burke began learning the fiddle around the age of seven, influenced by the Sligo style and repertoire he heard from family friends and recordings, though he also knew and heard musicians from many other parts of Ireland. While still a teenager he played in pub sessions and for dances with the Glenside Céilí Band, which won the All-Ireland title in 1966. In 1976 he joined the influential music group The Bothy Band and toured with them and as a duo with the group's guitarist, Mícheál Ó Domhnaill. In 1979 he moved to Portland, Oregon and has lived there ever since. He maintains an active career as a professional musician with many albums to his name.

Vincent Campbell (b.1938)
Vincent Campbell was born in the townland of An tSeanga Mheáin in a Gaeltacht region near Glenties, Co. Donegal. Music and dancing were integral parts of life during his youth. Emigration was also part of life: Vincent's parents had married in Philadelphia and many people in the locality migrated to Scotland on a seasonal basis as tattie hokers until the mid-1940s. In 1956 he left for Scotland where he initially worked on a hydroelectric scheme. He also travelled around Britain for work, including spending time in Glasgow, Wales, and London. He returned to Ireland in 1962, living in Meath for many years before moving with his family back to Donegal in 1978.

Sean Chamberlain (b.1940)
The sixth generation to live in the same house in Mitchelstown, Co. Cork, Sean Chamberlain is a baker, singer, and leader of the local brass band. He started playing accordion around age twelve and in his teenage years played saxophone in a dance

band called The Popular Five. After completing his leaving certificate, he left for England at age seventeen. He lived the good life in London, playing in bands and working in a variety of jobs. He and his wife Bríd returned to Mitchelstown in 1973 after Sean's brother Paddy asked him to help buy the premises of a bakery. It remains open in the centre of the town.

Billy Clifford (b.1943)
Flute player Billy Clifford was born in London to two well-known musicians from the Sliabh Luachra region, John and Julia Clifford (née Murphy). John played the accordion, Julia played the fiddle, and Julia's brother Denis Murphy was another wonderful fiddle player. Billy grew up in England until 1951, then went to live first at the home of his maternal grandmother in Lisheen, Co. Kerry, then in Newcastle West, Co. Limerick with his family, and returned again to England to work from 1959 to '69. He played with his parents in the Star of Munster Céilí Band in the 1950s and then in pubs and dance halls around London throughout the '60s. He won the All-Ireland title on the flute in 1970. He moved to Tipperary that year to take up a job as a television technician. Currently he teaches music at his home and at the Willie Clancy Summer School and in 2010 he released a solo album, *Echoes of Sliabh Luachra*.

Johnny Connolly (b.1944)
Melodeon player Johnny Connolly comes from Inis Bearacháin off the coast of Co. Galway in the Connemara Gaeltacht. His first public musical performance was playing tunes on stage during a regatta held in Lettermore, which Éamon de Valera attended. At age seventeen he migrated to Preston, Lancashire, where some of his older siblings lived and he worked in the construction industry. He married a Mayo woman and they returned to Ireland with their children in 1976. He is in high demand as a musician for sean-nós and step dancing.

Jack Conroy (b.1932)
Jack Conroy was born in Boston to parents from Connemara, both of whom enjoyed Irish music, and his father played the melodeon. As a teenager, Jack learned from accordionist Jerry O'Brien. In the '50s, he played with several dance bands in Roxbury, including Tommy Shields' Band, Martin Flaherty's Band, and Johnny Powell's Band. Jack is a Boston College alumnus (class of 1954) and after graduating he was drafted into the Army and later spent many years as a teacher abroad at military bases (making trips to Ireland when possible). He returned to Boston in 1995 and participates in Irish music gatherings around the city.

Mick Daly (b.1950)
Mick Daly has lived in Cork for his whole life, with the exception of one year spent in Dublin. His musical journey started with a guitar and a Bob Dylan songbook in his early teenage years and expanded to include Old Time, Bluegrass, rock, and Irish traditional music. He was an original member of the groups Any Old Time and Four Men & a Dog, and is still a member of The Lee Valley String Band, which celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2008. He has also played with Scullion, Arcady and the Mary Black Band and has toured the world on his many musical endeavours. A much sought-after guitar accompanist, singer, and five-string banjo player, he currently spends a few nights a week playing at The Corner House pub as well as working as a sound engineer and doing instrument repairs.

Kitty D'Entremont (b.1918)
Piano player Kitty D'Entremont was born in Medford, MA to a family from Co. Clare. Her mother played concertina and her father danced. Growing up, she enjoyed regular sessions of music at home every Sunday with members of her extended family. Kitty won a scholarship to New England Conservatory in 1937 and played in an all-girl dance band for a number of years. She also played traditional music in Roxbury's Hibernian Hall and the Co. Clare Club. Kitty later played in the Lexington big band "Prime Time," as well as at Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann music sessions. She welcomed many Irish musicians to Boston with her generous hospitality over the years.

Liam Farrell (b.1937)
Banjo player Liam Farrell is the youngest of a musical family from Ballygawley, Co. Tyrone. In 1956 he migrated to London, where he still lives, and he worked in the construction industry. He was long-time musical partner of accordion player Raymond Roland and the duo played every week for years in the White Hart in Fulham. Since Roland's untimely death, he has partnered with Joe Whelan and John Bowe. He also played regularly in the dance halls, with various céilí bands, and toured Ireland and the US for Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.

Eamon Flynn (b.1937)
Eamon Flynn, from Mountcollins in west Co. Limerick, plays the fiddle and accordion and composes tunes. At the age of eighteen he left Ireland to work in England for less than a year, but in that time he played music with many of the great musicians of the day in the pubs and dance halls. He returned home for a couple years and then in 1959 he went to the US, first to Lawrence, MA and then to Boston. There, he played in the New State Ballroom during the 1960s and later in pubs in the city. In 1985 he moved to Vermont where he became active with the Vermont Arts Council, travelling to play and teach music in schools around the state. He returned to live in Mountcollins in 2008.

Bobby Gardiner (b.1939)
Originally from Aughdarra in the Burren area of Co. Clare, accordion player Bobby Gardiner first learned traditional music from his family and the well-known 78rpm records made in America that found their way back to Ireland. In his youth he played with the Kilfenora Céilí Band and travelled all over Ireland with Malachy Sweeney's Céilí Band from Armagh. He migrated to the US looking for work around 1960 and spent two years in the Army in the mid-60s. Also during his time there he made his first recording, *Memories of Clare*, an LP on the Copley Records label. He returned to Ireland in 1970 and currently lives in Co. Tipperary and has taught accordion at University College Cork for over twenty-five years. He was honoured for his contributions to traditional music with the TG4 *Gradam Saoil* (Lifetime Achievement Award) in 2015.

John Gildea (b.1940)
John Gildea grew up in Ballinaglera, Co. Leitrim where he began his musical life playing the melodeon and later the two-row button accordion and listening to 78s of Jerry O'Brien, Joe Derrane, Michael Coleman and the other virtuosos of the time. He

migrated to England in 1959 at the age of nineteen and spent twenty years there working all over Britain in various construction jobs and playing music whenever he had the opportunity. He returned to Ireland to take up a job in Cork in 1979.

Reg Hall (b.1933)
Reg Hall was born into an English working-class family in Northfleet, Kent. At age thirteen his brother first took him to hear a live jazz band and that has remained an interest of his ever since. He also had an interest in folk music from a young age, fed by radio programmes, and around 1956 he began going to Irish music sessions in London, particularly to hear and play with Michael Gorman and Margaret Barry. He has had an influential role in recording Irish music in London, creating his own personal collection and producing albums for the label Topic Records. He was a social worker in the prison service for over thirty years before he returned to university and earned a Ph.D. at the University of Sussex. His dissertation is titled 'Irish Music and Dance in London, 1890-1970: A Socio-Cultural History'.

Kevin Henry (b.1929)
Flute player and piper Kevin Henry was born in Cloonlarhan, Co. Mayo on the Sligo border, the eighth of eleven children. It was a musical family and region and he cites the local fife and drum band tradition and house dances as important influences in his youth. Kevin went to England in 1947 where he worked in agriculture and construction seasonally and after three years went into coal mining. He left for Canada in 1953 and stayed there for about nine months before crossing the border to New York, where he worked digging tunnels and in other jobs. He then spent a few months in Florida before moving to Chicago, where, apart from four months in Butte, Montana, he has lived ever since, spending thirty-seven years as an ironworker. He continues to keep alive the musical traditions of his native area and the legacy of music collector Francis O'Neill in his adopted home.

Karin Joyce (b.1955)
Karin Joyce was born in Cambridge, MA to a mother who had emigrated from Kilchreest, Co. Galway in 1927. Though she does not play music herself, she has been involved in the Irish music and dance scene all her life, in Boston and in her time spent in Ireland. She was married to accordion player Joe Joyce (1929-2007) and their daughter Catherine plays the fiddle.

Helen Kisiel (b.1937)
Helen Kisiel learned to play piano growing up accompanying her Polish father who played fiddle. She went to Ireland for the first time in 1977 and began learning Irish music on the whistle when she returned, taught by Brendan Tonra, who became her long-time musical partner. Since that time she has been very involved in the music scene in the Boston area, participating in Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and sessions around the city. She and Brendan recorded two albums together.

Ben Lennon (b.1928)
Ben Lennon was born into a musical family in Kiltyclogher, Co. Leitrim in 1928. His father played the fiddle and his mother played the piano and his brother Charlie is a well-respected composer and fiddle and piano player. Ben migrated to work in the garment industry in London in 1949 and lived there for five years, though he did not know of or participate in the Irish music scene at that time. He returned to

Ireland and subsequently lived in Limerick, Cork, and Donegal before retiring and settling permanently in Rossinver, Co. Leitrim. He has recorded a number of CDs, regularly teaches music at summer festivals, and was honoured for his musical legacy with the TG4 *Gradam Saoil* (Lifetime Achievement Award) in 2011.

John (Jerry) J. Lynch (b.1934, d. 2 May 2011)
From Clogher, Kilfenora, Co. Clare, accordion player Jerry Lynch was a member of the Kilfenora Céilí Band that won three All-Ireland titles in the 1950s. He first went to the US in 1959 with his wife Elizabeth (Betty). In New York City he lived in the Bronx and worked in tunnel construction and also played regularly at the Red Mill dance hall and at pubs around the city. He returned to Ireland from 1977 to '89, but then went back to New York to work for another five years before finally retiring to Clare. Betty also sings and has an interest in music and his daughter Tara plays the accordion.

Tara Lynch (b.1966)
Tara Lynch, the daughter of Jerry Lynch, was born in the Bronx, NY, but her family moved back to Clare when she was eleven, at which point she began learning the accordion from her father and local teacher Gus Tierney. She lived in England for several years and moved to New Jersey in 1991. She first moved to Boston in 1998 and, after some time spent in working in Poland, returned in 2008.

Jimmy Marshall (b.1946)
Jimmy Marshall grew up in Killsorcan, Co. Kerry near Killarney, in the musical region known as Sliabh Luachra. His two brothers, Tom and Éamon and sister, Kathleen, all play the accordion. Jimmy spent several months working in England before he migrated to Worcester, MA in 1964 and worked as a bus driver. He still lives there (as does his brother Éamon) and he drives into Boston regularly to play at sessions.

Ann McAuliffe (née Sheehy) (b.1946)
Ann McAuliffe comes from Glenoe, Listowel, Co. Kerry. Her father played fiddle and, unusual for the time, could also read music. He began teaching Ann and her sister and after the formation of Comhaltas they went to music classes. She also learned the accordion and later the concertina. She began teaching music when she married Nicky McAuliffe and both have influenced a new generation of musicians.

Nicholas (Nicky) McAuliffe (b.1945)
Fiddle player and music teacher Nicky McAuliffe comes from north Co. Kerry between Castleisland and Brosna. He never had a regular music teacher, but picked up tunes from his father, who played the melodeon, older fiddlers in the area, and from 78s and records. Very early on he started going to the *fleadheanna cheoil* organized by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and met many other musicians there. He spent about six months working and playing music in London in 1969. He returned to Ireland for a fleadh, was offered a job teaching music, and stayed. He and his wife Ann also went on many tours around the world with CCÉ and both currently teach music full-time.

Cathal McConnell (b.1944)
Singer and flute and whistle player Cathal McConnell comes from Ballinaleck, Co. Fermanagh. His father was a shopkeeper as well as a singer and flute and whistle player with a great interest in music. Cathal and his brothers also learned from a local man, Peter Flanagan and others. He and his family travelled to many *fleadheanna cheoil* and he won the senior All-Ireland title on flute in 1962. Later in the '60s he got involved in the folk club scene, met Robin Morton, and became a founding member of the band The Boys of the Lough, which toured first in 1967 and still performs regularly. In 2010 TG4 named Cathal 'Traditional Singer of the Year'.

Kevin McDermott (b.1936)
Kevin McDermott comes from Cavan town and his musical interests began initially with the drums and harmonica but he also took up the accordion. He grew up in a family of seven children raised by his mother from 1943 while his father worked in England and the rest of the family all eventually went to join him. Kevin spent three years in the Royal Air Force before moving to London in 1956. He worked there for twenty-five years as a fireman while also playing music on the side, including in the famous pub The Favourite on Holloway Road, where he met his wife. They and their two sons moved back to Ireland in 1990, settling in Co. Wexford.

Martin McMahon (b.1942)
Accordion player Martin McMahon comes from west Co. Clare near Carrigaholt. His maternal grandparents raised him while his parents lived and worked in England, but his father was a great set-dancer and his mother bought Martin his first accordion. He joined his parents in England in 1958 at the age of sixteen. He learned much of his music from the musicians he encountered in London and he won the All-Ireland on accordion in 1962. Eventually he and his wife Teresa made a living as professional musicians, playing seven nights a week in dance halls and pubs in a group with a drummer called 'The Caravelles'.

Teresa McMahon (née Britton) (b.1942)
Teresa McMahon comes from Ballincurry in south Co. Tipperary and plays the piano, accordion, and sings. She first went to London in 1957 with her father and a couple years later the rest of the family joined them. She learned many of the old rebel songs and ballads that she sang in the dance halls and pubs from her father. Martin and Teresa were married in 1963 and returned to live in Clare in 1998.

Danny Meehan (b.1940)
Fiddler Danny Meehan grew up in Drimalost, in the Blue Stack Mountains about four miles from Donegal Town, in a family and region with a rich musical heritage. He migrated at the age of sixteen in 1957 to Selby, Yorkshire. He worked in many places across Britain, finally settling in London in 1963 where he established a career as a self-employed stonemason. He also met and played with many great musicians in pubs, folk clubs, and concert halls in London. He appears on the album *Paddy in the Smoke*, with the group Le Chéile, and has two solo albums. He returned to live in Donegal in 2007. In 2012 TG4 honoured him with the *Gradam Saoil* (Lifetime Achievement Award).

Vince Milne (b.1950)
Vince Milne was born in Lisselane, Co. Cork to two parents from Co. Sligo. His father played fiddle and had a large collection of 78 records and from a young age Vince absorbed much of this music. He began playing the tin whistle and the accordion, but eventually got his own fiddle at age eleven. In 1971 he migrated to London, looking for a bit of adventure, and spent his time there working and playing music. He returned to Cork in 1977, found the music scene in the city much improved and has been an active member of it ever since, playing and recording with many groups including Nomos.

Martin Niland
Martin Niland comes from Roxboro, Co. Galway and began learning music on a single-row melodeon. He left Galway in 1955 and lived in Dublin for a few years before leaving to go to Manchester and then Luton in 1958. He found much more traditional music in England than in Dublin and he worked as a machine-driver in the construction industry. He returned to Ireland in 1972 and worked as manager with a company contracted to do work in Saudi Arabia and later ran his own business. He now lives in Co. Kildare and still plays music regularly in The Merchant pub in Dublin.

Jimmy Noonan (b.1962)
Flute and whistle player Jimmy Noonan grew up in Cleveland and began playing Irish music as a child marching in the city's St. Patrick's Day parade. He also started learning Irish step dancing around the same time. He made many trips to Ireland over the years, to visit his father's family in Co. Clare and compete in the annual All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil. He lived in Clare for a year before moving to Boston in 1985. He is now well-known in Boston as a flute and whistle teacher (both for Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and at Boston College) and he regularly leads sessions. He has recorded two solo albums, *The Clare Connection* and *The Maple Leaf*.

Jimmy O'Brien (b.1935)
Publican and singer Jimmy O'Brien comes from the Sliabh Luachra area of Co. Kerry and grew up surrounded by music, song, and dance. In 1956 he had trained as a mechanic and left for New York City with his wife, Mary. There, he met many of the great musicians in the city at house parties and social events and through his lifelong interest in the GAA. After five years he and his wife saw a pub in College Street, Killarney advertised for sale and had saved up enough money to purchase it. They returned to Ireland in 1961 and the pub, Jimmy O'Brien's, remained in business, with a reputation as a home for traditional music, until his retirement in 2013.

Tomás Ó Canainn (b.1930, d. 14 Sept. 2013)
Uilleann piper and singer Tomás Ó Canainn grew up in Derry. He attended Queens University Belfast and completed a Ph.D. at the University of Liverpool in electrical engineering. During his time there he was one of the founding members of the Liverpool Céilí Band that went on to win two All-Ireland titles. He subsequently took up a teaching position at University College Cork and has lived in Cork since 1961. When interviewed at eighty years of age he was still a well-respected figure on the music scene as both a piper and singer. He also wrote a number of books

including *Traditional Music in Ireland*, a memoir, *A Lifetime of Notes*, and an autobiographical novel, *Home to Derry.*

Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin (b.1950)
Jimmy Ó Ceannabháin is a sean-nós singer from Ros Muc in the Connemara Gaeltacht. He first left Ireland in 1966 for England, where he spent time in London and travelled around the country wherever work took him. After several years he left for the US where he lived in Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, and Chicago and many other places. He returned to Ros Muc in 2004 and decided that having seen so much of the world, he would also visit every county in Ireland, which he has done. He has entered the *Corn Uí Riada* singing competition at the *Oireachtas na Gaeilge* for a number of years and won in 2011.

Connie O'Connell (b.1943)
Fiddle player and composer Connie O'Connell comes from Cill na Martra, Co. Cork. His mother played the melodeon and music surrounded him growing up. He got his first fiddle at the age of twelve and largely taught himself the instrument. He knew and was influenced by many of the great Sliabh Luachra musicians, including Pádraig O'Keefe, Dennis Murphy, Julia Clifford, Paddy Cronin and Johnny O'Leary. In the 1960s he began teaching fiddle classes for Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and he has taught at UCC since the 1980s. He also composes tunes: in 2000 he released an album, *Ceol Cill na Martra*, that includes a wonderful selection of tunes old and new and more recently the UCC School of Music put a collection of his music online (www.music.ucc.ie/connieoconnell).

Mick O'Connor (b.1950)
Born in London to parents from Kerry and Roscommon, Mick began learning banjo as a teenager. Many great London Irish musicians including Bobby Casey, Tommy McCarthy, and Roger Sherlock inspired him over the years. He won an All-Ireland title on the banjo in 1971 and two with the London-based Thatch Céilí Band in 1986 and 1987. He is still a regular participant in the London Irish music scene and among its denizens has earned the nickname 'The Late Mick O'Connor' in reference to his (lack of) punctuality.

Desmond O'Halloran (b.29 Aug. 1940)
Des (Dessie) O'Halloran comes from a family of nine children on Inishbofin Island, five miles off the coast of Co. Galway. His father Martin was a shopkeeper and former member of the RIC and the eldest brother in the family, Christy, inspired a love of music in his siblings. Des migrated to London in 1959 and by the 1970s worked as a supervisor in the building industry. He returned to live in Galway in the 1980s. He plays fiddle and sings and has performed, recorded, and toured with the Sharon Shannon band.

Vincent O'Halloran (b.3 Sept. 1942, d.14 March 2014)
Vince O'Halloran is the younger brother of Des (above) and joined him in England in 1961. He worked as a carpenter, married and had three children, and remained living in London after his retirement. He twice won the All-England title on the accordion, in 1973 and '74. The two brothers recorded an album together with piano player Reg Hall in 1976, *The Men of the Island*, on the Topic Records label.

Sean O'Shea
Fiddle player Sean O'Shea was born in London to parents from Kerry and Monaghan. At the beginning of the Second World War he was evacuated and spent several years living with his maternal grandmother in Monaghan. He began learning fiddle at age eight and was a fixture of the London Irish music scene for many years in the pubs and dance halls, including the Galtymore and the Hibernian. He appears on the album *Paddy in the Smoke*. He worked as a policeman and later as a security guard.

Larry Reynolds (b.1932, d. 3 Oct. 2012)
Larry Reynolds comes from a musical household in Ahascragh, east Co. Galway. Around age ten his brother bought him a fiddle and his sister paid for him to have music lessons. In 1953 he migrated to Boston and soon became involved in the Irish music scene. Over the years he played with the Tara Céilí Band, the Connacht Céilí Band, the Boston Céilí Band, and the Tommy Sheridan Band. In 1975 he co-founded the Hanafin-Cooley branch of Comhaltas Ceolóirí Éireann and served as its chairman until the time of his death (it is now the Hanafin-Cooley-Reynolds branch in his honour). He and his wife Phyllis were known for their hospitality and support of Irish music in Boston and Larry has received numerous honours, including *Gradam an Comhaltais*, Friends of Harvard Celtic Studies Annual Recognition, and the Silver Key award from the Charitable Irish Society.

Roger Sherlock (b. 1932, d. 18 June 2015)
Flute player Roger Sherlock comes from Cloonfeightrin, Co. Mayo on the Sligo border. He grew up surrounded by music: his grandfather played flute and whistle, his father sang, and his mother played melodeon. In addition, there were many musicians in the local area, including Brendan Tonra (see below), who went to the same school as Roger, and he listened to records of the famous south Sligo fiddler Michael Coleman. He migrated to London in 1952 and there the first musician he encountered was west Limerick flute player Paddy Taylor. During the mid-1950s he also shared a flat and played music with Clare piper Willie Clancy. He led céilí bands in the dance halls and played with the Thatch Céilí Band when they won the All-Ireland title in 1986 and 1987, as well as playing in pub sessions. Roger and his wife returned to Ireland and settled in Bettystown, Co. Meath in 1994. In 2009 he received the TG4 *Gradam Saoil* (Lifetime Achievement Award).

Brendan Tonra (b.1935, d. 2 Feb. 2014)
Fiddle player and composer Brendan Tonra migrated to Boston from Gowlane, Co. Mayo on the Sligo border near Gurteen in 1959. He was an active member of the Boston Irish music scene from that time on, first in the dance halls on Dudley Street with the Tara Céilí Band, later with the Connacht Céilí Band, and at sessions in pubs and houses around the city. In 2002 he received the *Cumadóir na Bliana* (Composer of the Year) award from TG4 in recognition of his many contributions to the tradition over the years. Many of his tunes appear in the book, *A Musical Voyage with Brendan Tonra* and he made two recordings with pianist Helen Kisiel (above).

Martin Treacy
Flute player Martin Treacy comes from a musical family near Kilconnell in east Co. Galway. His father and older brother, Paddy, both played the flute as well. Before he left for London in 1955 he played for a year and a half with the Aughrim Slopes

Céilí Band, after it had gained recognition for winning the All-Ireland title in 1952 and ’53. In London he played in many dance halls and pubs, including at the Galtymore and with Martin and Teresa McMahon. He returned to live in Kilconnell in 1994.

Mick Treacy

Mick Treacy grew up in Mitchelstown, Co. Cork and always had an interest in music, particularly jazz. He trained in his father’s trade as a mechanic before deciding to leave for London in 1960. Upon arrival he knew exactly where to go for music, having read the *Melody Maker*. After three years he moved to Birmingham and in both cities he revelled in the jazz scene and also developed an interest in folk and traditional music. In Birmingham he sang with a group called The Munstermen and helped found The Holy Ground folk club. He was also involved in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. He returned to Dublin in 1967 where he did a brief stint as a professional singer and made two records. He returned to live in Mitchelstown in 1969.

Appendix 2: Interview Question Guide & Consent Form

The Social Research Ethics Committee, UCC approved both the interview question guide and informed consent form. The questions below provided a general outline to aid the progress of the interview; the interviews did not follow these questions verbatim.

Interview Question Guide:

- Background
    - Where did you grow up? Can you describe your family? (How many in the family, occupation of parents, etc.)
    - How did you start playing traditional music?
    - Did any particular musicians, recordings, or radio programs influence you growing up?
    - In what settings did you play music when you were young? (e.g. house dances, céilí bands, competitions, etc.)
- Emigration
    - When did you decide to emigrate? Why? (Or for non-migrants- did you consider emigrating? Why did you stay?)
    - Did you know others who had already emigrated?
    - Did music influence that decision? Did you think you would have more or less opportunities to play music abroad?
- Life abroad
    - What were your first impressions of [place]?
    - What was your main occupation? Was music a side-job or hobby?
    - When living abroad, in what settings did you play music? With whom?
    - What was different about playing music abroad compared to your experiences growing up?
- Maintaining connections to Ireland
    - What connections did you maintain to home? Communication with family? Visits?
    - For returned migrants: How long did you remain living abroad? When and why did you decide to return?
- Reflections
    - How has Ireland changed since you were young?
    - How has traditional music changed?

Sara Goek
Digital Arts & Humanities / History, University College Cork
Informed consent form

Migration, Identity & Traditional Music:
Irish Emigrant Experiences in the United States and Great Britain, 1945-1970

Information Sheet

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: To record and understand the experiences of Irish migrants in the US and Great Britain, particularly in relation to their involvement in traditional music.

WHAT WILL THE STUDY INVOLVE? Interviews with any interested people as possible, particularly people who emigrated from Ireland between 1945 and 1970 and played, listened, or danced to traditional music in the US or Britain. The audio of these will be recorded.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN ASKED TO PARTICIPATE? Participation is voluntary. You have been asked to take part because of your interest and knowledge of traditional music.

WILL YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL? If you wish to remain anonymous, you may specify that on the form below and your wishes will be respected.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE? With your permission, the interview will be quoted in my Ph.D. dissertation. In addition, I would like if the audio recording could appear in a digital archive and you may specify whether or not you wish that to happen on the form below.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS? The results of all interviews will be presented in my Ph.D. thesis, which is read by my supervisor and two other examiners. Future students with an interest in the topic may also read the thesis. Parts of the study may be published in a research journal. As mentioned above, with permission some interviews will also appear in a digital archive.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATING? This study will help to raise awareness of the rich heritage of the Irish diaspora and Irish traditional music. I do not envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part.

WHAT IF THERE IS A PROBLEM? The interview may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable. You may also specify any portion of it that you wish to remain off the record during or at the end of the interview.

WHO HAS REVIEWED THIS STUDY? The Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork

ANY FURTHER QUERIES? Please contact me at 0879437634 or sara.goek@gmail.com

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

Informed consent

I _____ agree to participate in Sara Goek's research study. The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing (above). I am participating voluntarily. I give permission for my interview with Sara Goek to be recorded in audio form. I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time. I understand that I can specify any parts of the data that should not be used or included in the study and my wishes will be respected.

YES / NO I agree to the quotation / publication of extracts from my interview

YES / NO I agree that my name may be used

YES / NO I agree that audio recording of this interview (not including sensitive data) may appear in a digital archive.

Signed _____ Date _____

After the interview, if there is any specific topic that arose during the interview you wish not to appear either in publication or digital archive, please specify below. If you wish to see a copy of the transcript or listen to the recording before making this decision, please also state that and provide a mailing address to which to send it.

Address:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 3: Demographic Data

Table 1: Total population, foreign-born population and Irish-born, with proportions, US Census, 1960

State, County, Met. Area*	Total Population	Total Foreign-born	Total Irish-born (Éire)	Irish-born / Total Population (percent)	Irish-born / Total Foreign-born (percent)
TOTAL all states	178,554,916	33,515,055	1,747,687	0.98%	5.21%
Alabama	3,266,740	44,324	1,422	0.04%	3.21%
Alaska	223,866	22,927	597	0.27%	2.60%
Arizona	1,302,161	234,284	4,746	0.36%	2.03%
Arkansas	1,786,272	17,814	563	0.03%	3.16%
California	15,717,204	3,990,221	116,692	0.74%	2.92%
San Francisco	*740,316*	*321,802*	*22,948*	*3.10%*	*7.13%*
Colorado	1,753,947	244,495	8,374	0.48%	3.43%
Connecticut	2,535,234	982,143	75,409	2.97%	7.68%
Delaware	446,292	58,890	4,725	1.06%	8.02%
Florida	4,951,560	724,974	26,835	0.54%	3.70%
Georgia	3,943,116	65,139	2,438	0.06%	3.74%
Hawaii	632,772	242,472	1,004	0.16%	0.41%
Idaho	667,191	71,651	1,589	0.24%	2.22%
Illinois	10,081,158	2,430,960	128,738	1.28%	5.30%
Chicago (Cook Co.)	*5,129,725*	*1,757,392*	*104,848*	*2.04%*	*5.97%*
Indiana	4,662,498	350,275	11,433	0.25%	3.26%
Iowa	2,755,537	437,973	13,733	0.50%	3.14%
Kansas	2,178,611	176,883	6,768	0.31%	3.83%
Kentucky	3,038,156	60,292	3,950	0.13%	6.55%
Louisiana	3,257,022	109,162	3,755	0.12%	3.44%
Maine	969,265	226,399	8,253	0.85%	3.65%
Maryland	3,100,689	368,175	18,292	0.59%	4.97%
Massachusetts	5,148,578	2,057,072	276,062	5.36%	13.42%
Suffolk Co.	791,329	361,493	78,029	9.86%	21.59%
Middlesex Co.	1,238,742	501,780	73,419	5.93%	14.63%
Norfolk Co.	510,256	195,582	29,745	5.83%	15.21%
Boston area total	*2,540,327*	*1,058,855*	*181,193*	*7.13%*	*17.11%*
Worcester Co.	583,228	233,827	23,726	4.07%	10.15%
Michigan	7,823,194	1,894,786	34,449	0.44%	1.82%
Minnesota	3,413,864	873,529	15,955	0.47%	1.83%
Mississippi	2,178,141	17,628	558	0.03%	3.17%
Missouri	4,319,813	332,052	20,326	0.47%	6.12%
Montana	674,767	139,101	6,752	1.00%	4.85%
Butte (Silver Bow Co.)	*46,454*	*15,514*	*2,490*	*5.36%*	*16.05%*
Nebraska	1,411,330	243,041	6,537	0.46%	2.69%

Nevada	285,278	45,622	1,566	0.55%	3.43%
New Hampshire	606,921	177,120	10,215	1.68%	5.77%
New Jersey	6,066,782	2,108,765	135,104	2.23%	6.41%
New Mexico	951,023	74,910	1,485	0.16%	1.98%
New York	16,782,304	6,487,444	492,012	2.93%	7.58%
Bronx Co.	1,424,815	720,822	84,468	5.93%	11.72%
Kings Co.	2,627,319	1,319,575	70,484	2.68%	5.34%
Queens Co.	1,809,578	935,567	80,743	4.46%	8.63%
New York Co.	1,698,281	720,653	67,305	3.96%	9.34%
Richmond Co.	221,991	88,834	8,638	3.89%	9.72%
New York City total	*7,781,984*	*3,785,451*	*311,638*	*4.00%*	*8.23%*
North Carolina	4,556,155	49,996	1,736	0.04%	3.47%
North Dakota	632,444	186,788	1,714	0.27%	0.92%
Ohio	9,706,397	1,478,695	49,828	0.51%	3.37%
Oklahoma	2,328,284	67,817	2,156	0.09%	3.18%
Oregon	1,768,687	294,902	7,909	0.45%	2.68%
Pennsylvania	11,319,366	2,499,302	153,450	1.36%	6.14%
Philadelphia	*2,002,512*	*582,468*	*58,008*	*2.90%*	*9.96%*
Rhode Island	859,488	339,719	28,681	3.34%	8.44%
Newport	*81,891*	*22,231*	*3,050*	*3.72%*	*13.72%*
Providence	*568,778*	*250,865*	*21,508*	*3.78%*	*8.57%*
South Carolina	2,382,594	29,080	1,301	0.05%	4.47%
South Dakota	680,514	130,566	2,242	0.33%	1.72%
Tennessee	3,567,089	47,838	2,185	0.06%	4.57%
Texas	9,579,677	1,027,487	11,844	0.12%	1.15%
Utah	890,627	130,637	1,530	0.17%	1.17%
Vermont	389,881	85,129	3,736	0.96%	4.39%
Virginia	3,966,949	151,506	7,486	0.19%	4.94%
Washington	2,853,214	650,613	15,063	0.53%	2.32%
West Virginia	1,860,421	79,537	2,116	0.11%	2.66%
Wisconsin	3,951,777	913,149	13,101	0.33%	1.43%
Wyoming	330,066	41,771	1,272	0.39%	3.05%

* The total for all states excludes Washington D.C. Where the metropolitan area corresponds to a county with a different name, that name appears in parentheses. Where the metropolitan area corresponds to multiple counties, those are listed individually first, and then a total is given after them.

Source: Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia. Data drawn from the *US Census of Population and Housing*, 1960.

Table 2: Years of schooling completed by US population groups, 1960

	8 yrs or less education, as percent	High school, as percent	College, as percent	Median years education*
Native-born Total	34.7%	49.6%	15.7%	10.85
Male	37.0%	45.8%	17.2%	10.6
Female	32.5%	53.1%	14.3%	11.1
Native Parentage Total	34.7%	49.8%	15.5%	10.85
Male	37.4%	46.0%	16.6%	10.6
Female	32.2%	53.4%	14.5%	11.1
Foreign or Mixed Parentage Total	34.8%	48.7%	16.6%	11
Male	35.3%	44.9%	19.7%	10.9
Female	34.1%	52.3%	13.6%	11.1
Foreign-born Total	62.3%	26.7%	10.9%	8.45
Male	62.4%	24.2%	13.4%	8.4
Female	62.2%	29.2%	8.6%	8.5
Irish-born Total	63.7%	29.2%	7.2%	8.6
Male	62.5%	28.4%	9.1%	8.6
Female	64.4%	29.7%	5.9%	8.6
Irish of Foreign or Mixed Parentage Total**	31.5%	50.3%	18.1%	11.5
Male	32.8%	45.9%	21.3%	11.3
Female	30.6%	54.0%	15.5%	11.7

* The median given for the 'total' figures is an average median value (calculated by averaging the male and female values).

** This group includes first- and second-generation Irish. It is not possible to disaggregate them.

Source: *US Census of Population, 1960*, Subject Reports, 'Nativity and Parentage', 1A-1E, Section 2, Tables 5 & 10.

Table 3: Irish-born population in US by sex, age, and years of schooling completed, 1960

		Age 14-44		Age 45 and over	
	Years of schooling	Total	As percentage of total in age group	Total	As percentage of total in age group
Male	Total	29189		104528	
Elementary	<5 yrs	454	1.56%	9238	8.84%
	5-7 yrs	3300	11.31%	24674	23.61%
	8 yrs	7286	24.96%	38665	36.99%
High school	1-3 yrs	6177	21.16%	11242	10.76%
	4 yrs	6550	22.44%	13997	13.39%
College	1-3 yrs	2693	9.23%	3462	3.31%
	>4 yrs	2729	9.35%	3250	3.11%
Average median school years completed		10.67		8.43	

		Age 14-44		Age 45 and over	
	Years of schooling	Total	As percentage of total in age group	Total	As percentage of total in age group
Female	Total	41083		159452	
Elementary	<5 yrs	467	1.14%	12753	8.00%
	5-7 yrs	3706	9.02%	36178	22.69%
	8 yrs	9932	24.18%	66036	41.41%
High school	1-3 yrs	9427	22.95%	16885	10.59%
	4 yrs	12448	30.30%	20902	13.11%
College	1-3 yrs	3559	8.66%	3672	2.30%
	>4 yrs	1544	3.76%	3026	1.90%
Average median school years completed		11.03		8.45	

Source: *US Census of Population, 1960*, Subject Reports, 'Nativity and Parentage' 1A-1E, Section 2, Table 12.

Table 4: Occupation by sex, parentage and nativity groups in the US, 1960

Occupational category

1. Professional, technical & kindred
2. Farmers & farm managers
3. Managers, officials & proprietors
4. Clerical & kindred
5. Sales
6. Craftsmen, foremen & kindred
7. Operatives & kindred
8. Service workers, including private household
9. Farm labourers & foremen
10. Labourers, except farm & mind
11. Occupation not reported

	American parentage		Foreign-born		Irish-born		Irish of foreign or mixed parentage*	
Cat.	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Male	32346602		2869915		86768		444215	
1.	3180450	9.83%	283127	9.87%	5651	6.51%	59174	13.32%
2.	1941997	6.00%	71470	2.49%	506	0.58%	6565	1.48%
3.	3197894	9.89%	351497	12.25%	6410	7.39%	56468	12.71%
4.	2192935	6.78%	143686	5.01%	8274	9.54%	62938	14.17%
5.	2160961	6.68%	173613	6.05%	3103	3.58%	34493	7.76%
6.	6092172	18.83%	631666	22.01%	19970	23.02%	82760	18.63%
7.	6560563	20.28%	538566	18.77%	15731	18.13%	64924	14.62%
8.	1875940	5.80%	307372	10.71%	15777	18.18%	46323	10.43%
9.	998132	3.09%	106931	3.73%	450	0.52%	1724	0.39%
10.	2390850	7.39%	194010	6.76%	8870	10.22%	19323	4.35%
11.	1754708	5.42%	67977	2.37%	2026	2.33%	9523	2.14%
Female	16033043		1284462		64472		251596	
1.	2133270	13.31%	126012	9.81%	8456	13.12%	46622	18.53%
2.	93740	0.58%	5903	0.46%	53	0.08%	358	0.14%
3.	556544	3.47%	55019	4.28%	1467	2.28%	9896	3.93%
4.	4670784	29.13%	251601	19.59%	12264	19.02%	115379	45.86%
5.	1207479	7.53%	106121	8.26%	2875	4.46%	16938	6.73%
6.	171740	1.07%	22272	1.73%	613	0.95%	2903	1.15%
7.	2251443	14.04%	330465	25.73%	6046	9.38%	20982	8.34%
8.	3625414	22.61%	320861	24.98%	30322	47.03%	30008	11.93%
9.	201377	1.26%	10476	0.82%	33	0.05%	336	0.13%
10.	86036	0.54%	7205	0.56%	255	0.40%	621	0.25%
11.	1035216	6.46%	48527	3.78%	2088	3.24%	7553	3.00%

* This group includes first- and second-generation Irish. It is not possible to disaggregate them.

Source: *US Census of Population, 1960*, Subject Reports, 'Nativity and Parentage' 1A-1E, Section 2, Tables 5 & 11.

Table 5: Occupations of the Irish-born population in the US by age and sex, 1960

Occupational category

1. Professional, technical & kindred
2. Farmers & farm managers
3. Managers, officials & proprietors
4. Clerical & kindred
5. Sales
6. Craftsmen, foremen & kindred
7. Operatives & kindred
8. Service workers, including private household
9. Farm labourers & foremen
10. Labourers, except farm & mind
11. Occupation not reported

	Age 14 to 44		Age 44 and over	
Category	Total	Occupation as percent of total in age group	Total	Occupation as percent of total in age group
Male total	*25917*		*60941*	
1.	2602	10.04%	3049	5.00%
2.	53	0.20%	453	0.74%
3.	1506	5.81%	4904	8.05%
4.	2822	10.89%	5452	8.95%
5.	1114	4.30%	1989	3.26%
6.	6134	23.67%	13836	22.70%
7.	4648	17.93%	11083	18.19%
8.	3322	12.82%	12455	20.44%
9.	132	0.51%	318	0.52%
10.	2921	11.27%	6039	9.91%
11.	663	2.56%	1363	2.24%
Female total	*21889*		*42583*	
1.	3458	15.80%	4998	11.74%
2.	0	0	53	0.12%
3.	258	1.18%	1209	2.84%
4.	7338	33.52%	4926	11.57%
5.	845	3.86%	2030	4.77%
6.	154	0.70%	459	1.08%
7.	1791	8.18%	4255	9.99%
8.	7431	33.95%	22891	53.76%
9.	4	0.02%	29	0.07%
10.	73	0.33%	182	0.43%
11.	537	2.45%	1551	3.64%

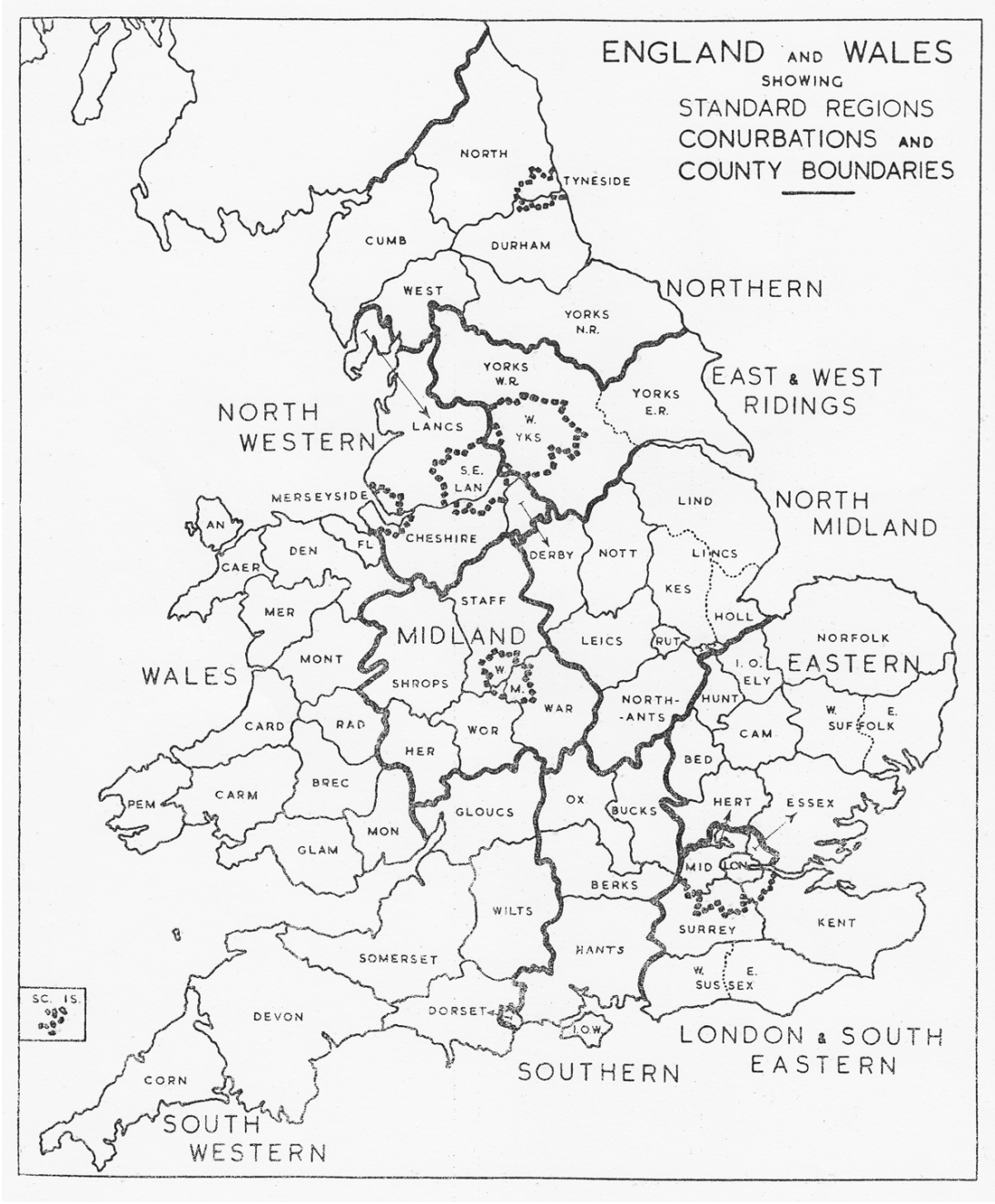
Source: *1960 Census of Population*, Subject Reports 1A-1E, Section 2, Table 13.

Table 6: Regional distribution of Irish-born and total population in England & Wales and Scotland, 1961 (refer to maps below)

Region	Total pop.	Irish-born*	Irish-born as percent of total pop.	Irish in region as percent of total Irish in Britain
England & Wales total	*46104548*	*682316*	*1.48%*	*94.04%*
Northern Region	3252471	11226	0.35%	1.55%
Tyneside Conurbation	855295	2939	0.34%	0.41%
Remainder of Northern	2397176	8287	0.35%	1.14%
East and West Ridings	4171874	32451	0.78%	4.47%
West Yorkshire Conurbation	1703678	19010	1.12%	2.62%
Remainder of East & West Ridings	2468196	13441	0.54%	1.85%
North Western	6567239	98977	1.51%	13.64%
South East Lancashire Conurbation (Manchester)	2427919	50064	2.06%	6.90%
Merseyside Conurbation (Liverpool)	1384198	21633	1.56%	2.98%
Remainder of North Western	2755122	27280	0.99%	3.76%
North Midland	3634195	34115	0.94%	4.70%
Midland	4757346	92473	1.94%	12.75%
West Midlands Conurbation (Birmingham)	2346579	57636	2.46%	7.94%
Remainder of Midland	2410767	34837	1.45%	4.80%
Eastern	3736093	44188	1.18%	6.09%
London and South Eastern	11103673	286467	2.58%	39.48%
Greater London Conurbation	8182550	253926	3.10%	35.00%
Remainder of South Eastern	2921123	32541	1.11%	4.49%
Southern	2826496	36755	1.30%	5.07%
South Western	3411138	28971	0.85%	3.99%
Wales	2644023	17273	0.65%	2.38%
Wales I (South East)	1897600	11919	0.63%	1.64%
Wales II (Remainder)	746423	5354	0.72%	0.74%
Scotland total	*5179344*	*43225*	*0.83%*	*5.96%*
Northern Division	973691	3478	0.36%	0.48%
Crofting Counties	277948	1134	0.41%	0.16%
Remainder of Northern	695743	2344	0.34%	0.32%
East Central	1465714	8832	0.60%	1.22%
West Central	2492677	29693	1.19%	4.09%
Central Clydeside Conurbation (Glasgow)	1802035	25084	1.39%	3.46%
Remainder of West Central	690642	4609	0.67%	0.64%
Southern	247262	1222	0.49%	0.17%
Border Counties	100828	506	0.50%	0.07%
Remainder of Southern	146434	716	0.49%	0.10%

* This includes those who gave their place of birth as the Republic of Ireland and Ireland (part not stated). It does not include Northern Ireland.

Source for table 6 and maps below: *Census of England and Wales, 1961*, Birthplace and Nationality Tables, Table 1, Birthplaces and nationalities of the whole population; *Census of Scotland, 1961*, Vol.5 Birthplace and Nationality, Table 1, Birthplaces and nationalities of the whole population.




SCOTLAND
CITIES, COUNTIES AND REGIONAL DIVISIONS
ORKNEY
ZETLAND
CAITHNESS
SUTHERLAND
ROSS AND CROMARTY
NAIRN
MORAY
BANFF
ABERDEEN
Aberdeen
INVERNESS
NORTHERN
KINCARDINE
ANGUS
PERTH
Dundee
ARGYLL
FIFE
KINROSS
CLKMN
EAST CENTRAL
STIRLING
DUNBARTON
Edinburgh
WEST LOTHIAN
EAST LOTHIAN
RENFREW
Glasgow
MIDLOTHIAN
BERWICK
LANARK
WEST CENTRAL
PEEBLES
SELKIRK
AYR
ROXBURGH
SOUTHERN
DUMFRIES
KIRKCUDBRIGHT
WIGTOWN
SCALE OF MILES
10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50

Table 7: Occupations in England & Wales, 1961

Occupational categories

1. Farmers, foresters, fishermen
2. Miners and quarrymen
3. Gas, coke and chemical makers
4. Glass and ceramics makers
5. Furnace, forge, foundry, rolling mill workers
6. Electrical and electronic workers
7. Engineering and allied trades
8. Woodworkers
9. Leather workers
10. Textile workers
11. Clothing workers
12. Food, drink and tobacco workers
13. Paper and printing workers
14. Makers of other products
15. Construction workers
16. Painters and decorators
17. Drivers of stationary engines, cranes, etc.
18. Labourers
19. Transport and communications workers
20. Warehousemen, storekeepers, packers, bottlers
21. Clerical workers
22. Sales workers
23. Service, sport and recreation workers
24. Administrators and managers
25. Professional, technical workers, artists
26. Armed forces
27. Inadequately described occupations

	Total population	Commonwealth -born	Irish-born	Irish-born as percent of total in occupation category	Irish-born in occupation category as percentage of total Irish-born
Men					
1.	754,150	2,490	3712	0.49%	1.77%
2.	457550	38	2558	0.56%	1.22%
3.	11795	95	1709	14.49%	0.81%
4.	65850	45	63	0.10%	0.03%
5.	205160	1,180	3363	1.64%	1.60%
6.	433310	3,360	3705	0.86%	1.76%
7.	2157060	14,280	29030	1.35%	13.82%
8.	392690	1,720	6267	1.60%	2.98%
9.	86510	70	58	0.07%	0.03%
10.	146700	2,060	86	0.06%	0.04%
11.	86040	1,760	103	0.12%	0.05%
12.	253280	1,380	2932	1.16%	1.40%
13.	202870	1,140	1336	0.66%	0.64%
14.	173760	1,740	3463	1.99%	1.65%
15.	513750	1,440	14810	2.88%	7.05%
16.	294380	1,190	6042	2.05%	2.88%
17.	280120	1,270	7279	2.60%	3.47%
18.	1100320	9,930	48350	4.39%	23.02%
19.	1236220	9,410	15690	1.27%	7.47%
20.	478250	3,440	8073	1.69%	3.84%

21.	1045380	13,800	10577	1.01%	5.04%
22.	1165120	9,430	6748	0.58%	3.21%
23.	740280	11,200	11375	1.54%	5.42%
24.	562630	6,750	3405	0.61%	1.62%
25.	1172770	25,850	11576	0.99%	5.51%
26.	296560	5,500	3794	1.28%	1.81%
27.	231420	3,090	3959	1.71%	1.88%
Total	14,543,925	133,658	210063	1.44%	
Women					
1.	78460	54	19	0.02%	0.02%
2.	350	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
3.	13330	6	21	0.16%	0.02%
4.	35760	8	19	0.05%	0.02%
5.	10240	5	20	0.20%	0.02%
6.	54570	36	1533	2.81%	1.35%
7.	252660	97	6262	2.48%	5.53%
8.	10530	4	10	0.09%	0.01%
9.	62970	20	68	0.11%	0.06%
10.	252370	30	1764	0.70%	1.56%
11.	361430	4,170	2666	0.74%	2.35%
12.	88030	45	1292	1.47%	1.14%
13.	100120	36	1036	1.03%	0.91%
14.	118130	60	1962	1.66%	1.73%
15.	500	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
16.	11920	0	18	0.15%	0.02%
17.	2790	1	3	0.11%	0.00%
18.	91910	38	2164	2.35%	1.91%
19.	131350	82	2132	1.62%	1.88%
20.	274930	1,070	4463	1.62%	3.94%
21.	1795970	19,390	16775	0.93%	14.80%
22.	898050	3,810	7779	0.87%	6.87%
23.	1512720	7,600	36200	2.39%	31.95%
24.	38530	58	31	0.08%	0.03%
25.	707320	14,310	25170	3.56%	22.21%
26.	11520	16	11	0.10%	0.01%
27.	128930	1,160	1889	1.47%	1.67%
Total	7045390	52,106	113307	1.61%	

Source: *Census 1961, England & Wales*, Occupation Tables, table 30; Brian Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988), p.107.

Table 8: Irish-born people who lived outside Ireland for 1 year or more, by age group and previous residence

1996

Age	Total	UK	Other EU	USA	Other	UK as percent of total	USA as percent of total
Under 19	12073	6772	1055	1535	2711	56.1%	12.7%
20 to 29	26577	16808	3359	2771	3639	63.2%	10.4%
30 to 39	40849	25189	3211	5893	6556	61.7%	14.4%
40 to 49	36514	26040	2153	2929	5392	71.3%	8.0%
50 to 59	41908	33074	1038	3835	3961	78.9%	9.2%
60 to 69	29932	24192	443	3076	2221	80.8%	10.3%
Over 70	23646	18951	343	2623	1729	80.1%	11.1%
All	211499	151026	11602	22662	26209	71.4%	10.7%

2006

Age	Total	UK	Other EU	USA	Other	UK as percent of total	USA as percent of total
Under 19	14012	4404	1659	1560	6389	31.4%	11.1%
20 to 29	44167	14298	5458	4225	20186	32.4%	9.6%
30 to 39	44167	42973	9447	12010	24121	97.3%	27.2%
40 to 49	71537	39842	6087	11234	14374	55.7%	15.7%
50 to 59	53049	34740	3434	4317	10558	65.5%	8.1%
60 to 69	56562	41857	1682	4892	8131	74.0%	8.6%
Over 70	46875	34102	829	4762	7182	72.8%	10.2%
All	374753	212216	28596	43000	90941	56.6%	11.5%

Source: *Census of Population of Ireland, 1996*, vol.4, table 24; *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4, table 26.

Table 9: People who lived outside Ireland for one year or more by county of current residence and country of previous residence

County	Total usually resident	Total returnees	Previous residence				Returnees as percent	
			UK	Other EU	USA	Other	of total usually resident	UK & USA as percent of total returnees
Carlow	49174	7559	3887	1440	444	1788	15.4%	8.8%
Dublin Co. and City	1146652	230277	79545	53311	18052	79369	20.1%	8.5%
Kildare	181711	32153	14218	6245	2568	9122	17.7%	9.2%
Kilkenny	85337	13853	7771	1903	887	3292	16.2%	10.1%
Laois	65208	9381	5235	1504	491	2151	14.4%	8.8%
Longford	33795	6019	3406	988	616	1009	17.8%	11.9%
Louth	108879	17340	8581	2674	1340	4745	15.9%	9.1%
Meath	159061	27831	13370	4857	2595	7009	17.5%	10.0%
Offaly	69192	10061	5409	1589	832	2231	14.5%	9.0%
Westmeath	77190	13889	7132	2278	1222	3257	18.0%	10.8%
Wexford	128686	21712	12950	3630	1062	4070	16.9%	10.9%
Wicklow	122771	23475	11583	3914	1910	6068	19.1%	11.0%
Clare	107101	21266	11167	3095	2443	4561	19.9%	12.7%
Cork Co. and City	468521	82170	39620	16137	6931	19482	17.5%	9.9%
Kerry	133118	27323	15381	3933	3281	4728	20.5%	14.0%
Limerick Co. and City	177811	29797	14753	5659	2351	7034	16.8%	9.6%
Tipperary	145840	24389	14654	3337	1652	4746	16.7%	11.2%
Waterford Co. and City	104716	17967	10173	2394	1253	4147	17.2%	10.9%
Galway Co. and City	222400	50939	25089	8359	6149	11342	22.9%	14.0%
Leitrim	28279	6671	4209	801	714	947	23.6%	17.4%
Mayo	119718	27824	19123	2694	2391	3616	23.2%	18.0%
Roscommon	57390	12064	7855	1323	934	1952	21.0%	15.3%
Sligo	58946	11801	7236	1440	1114	2011	20.0%	14.2%
Cavan	62421	11005	6158	1782	1079	1986	17.6%	11.6%
Donegal	142636	32236	24089	1744	2330	4073	22.6%	18.5%
Monaghan	54780	9575	5091	2120	765	1599	17.5%	10.7%
Total	4111333	778577	377685	139151	65406	196335	18.9%	10.8%

Source: *Census of Population of Ireland, 2006*, vol.4, table 23.

Appendix 4: Songs

Boys of Barr na Sráide[1]

O the town it climbs the mountain and looks upon the sea,
And sleeping time or waking 'tis there I long to be,
To walk again that kindly street, the place I grew a man
And the Boys of Barr na Sraide went hunting for the wran.

With cudgels stout we roamed about to hunt the droileen.
We looked for birds in every furze from Letter to Dooneen:
We sang for joy beneath the sky, life held no print or plan,
And we Boys in Barr na Sraide, hunting for the wran.

And when the hills were bleeding and the rifles were aflame,
To the rebel homes of Kerry the Saxon stranger came,
But the men who dared the Auxies and beat the Black and Tan
Were the Boys of Barr na Sraide hunting for the wran.

And here's a toast to them tonight, the lads who laughed with me,
By the groves of Carhan River or the slopes of Beenatee,
John Dawley and Batt Andy, and the Sheehans Con and Dan,
And the Boys of Barr na Sraide who hunted for the wran.

And now they toil on foreign soil, where they have gone their way
Deep in the heart of London town or over in Broadway.
And I am left to sing their deeds, and praise them while I can
Those Boys of Barr na Sraide who hunted for the wran.

And when the wheel of life runs down and peace comes over me,
O lay me down in that old town between the hill and sea,
I'll take my sleep in those green fields the place my life began,
Where the Boys of Barr na Sraide went hunting for the wran.

Building Up and Tearing England Down[2]

I have won the hero's name
With McAlpine and Costain
FitzMurphy Ash and Wimpey's gangs
I've been often on the road
On me way to draw the dole
There's nothing left to do for Johnny Laing
I used to think that God
Made the mixer pick and hod

[1] Written by Sigerson Clifford. This song possibly appeared first in the early 1950s on radio or in print. Sigerson Clifford, *Ballads of a Bogman* (Mercier Press, Cork, 1955), pp.84-5.
[2] Written by Dominic Behan in 1965.

So that Paddy might know hell above the ground
I've had gangers big and tough
Tell me tales old and rough
When you're building up and tearing England down.

In the tunnel underground
A young Limerick man was found
He was built into the New Victoria Line
When the bonus gang had past
Sticking from the concrete cast
Was the face of little Charlie Joe Devine
A ganger named McGurk
Made Paddy hate the work
When a gas-main burst he flew off the ground
Oh they swore he said gone slack
I won't be here until I'm back
Keep on building up and tearing England down

I remember Jack McCann
That poor old stuttering man
Felt the better for his stammer in a week
And that poor old stuttering man
He fell from a shuttering jam
And was never ever more
Inclined to speak.
No more like Robin Hood will he roam down Cricklewood
Or dance around the pubs of Camden Town
Oh let no man complain
Sure no Pat can die in vain
When you're building up and tearing England down.

I remember Carrier Jack
With his hod upon his back
He swore he'd one day set the world on fire
But his face they'd never seen
Filth! his shovel it cut clean
Through the middle of a big high tension wire
I saw the big McCall
From a big flyover fall
Into a concrete mixer spinning round
O it was not his intent
He got a fine head of cement
While building up and tearing England down.

So come all you navies bold
Who may think that English gold
Is just waiting to be taken from each sod
Or the likes of you and me
Would ever get an O.B.E.
Or a knighthood for good service to the hod

There's a concrete master race
To keep you in your place
And a ganger man to knock you to the ground
If you ever try to take
Part of what the bosses make
When you're building up and tearing England down.
When you're building up and tearing England down.

England's Motorway[3]

Come my little son and I will tell you what we'll do,
Undress yourself and get into your bed and a tale I'll tell to you
It's all about your daddy, he's a man you seldom see
For he's had to roam far away from home, away from you and me.

Remember laddie he's still your dad
Though he's working far away
In the cold and the heat all the hours of the week
On England's Motorway

When you fall and hurt yourself and get up feeling bad,
It isn't any use to go a-running for your dad,
For the only time since you were born that he's had to spend with you,
He was out of a job and we hadn't a bob, he was signing on the brew.

Remember laddie he's still your dad
And he really earns his pay
Working day and night out on the site
Of England's Motorway

Sure we need daddy here and sure it would be fine
To have him working nearer home and to see him all the time
But beggars can't be choosers and we have to bear our load
For we need the money your daddy earns out working on the road.

Remember laddie he's still your dad
And he'll soon be here to stay
For a week or two with me and you
When he's built the motorway.

The Fleadh Cheoil in Ennis[4]

Will you sit back awhile till I sing you a song
Tis not very short nor tis not very long;
Its about the Fleadh Cheoil down in Ennis you see

[3] Written by Ewan MacColl in 1959 for the BBC radio ballad *Song of a Road*, which tells the story of the making of the M1, Britain's first motorway. More than half of the workforce of 19,000 men was Irish. The song has since entered the Irish and folk tradition. Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker & Peggy Seeger, *Song of a Road*, BBC radio ballad, 1959 (Topic Records, 2008).
[4] Written by Robbie MacMahon to commemorate the 1956 Fleadh Cheoil held in Ennis, Co. Clare.

So to me will you pay your attention.
I'm not a great singer but I know there are worse
I cannot help trying to sing you a verse;
For to let you all know how the Fleadh Cheoil got on
For you, now, who couldn't attend it.

They came from the North and they came from the East
From the West and the South 'twas a thriller to see;
With fiddles and bagpipes and piccolos too
And drum sticks to keep them in order.
They came down from Dublin so hearty and gay
They brought Leo Rowsome to show them the way;
Himself and Sean Seery they played all the way.
With their flute payer Vincent O'Broderick.

-- Sciddery-idle dom-diddery dom-diddery die dee.

They came down from Cavan so far far away
I'm sure they were travelling for most of a day;
With singers and players the best I can say
To compete at the Fleadh down in Ennis.
Their players were good and their singers were keen
But Margaret O'Reilly was the best of the team;
And big Doctor Galligan he wore the bainín
Just to swank at the Fleadh down in Ennis.

From the kingdom of Kerry they all made their way
And brave Dennis Murphy he started to play;
The 'Ould Floggin Reel' and 'The Black Cup o' Tay'
Sure you'd feel ten times younger right after;
From Limerick's fair city they came by the score
And Johnny MacMahon he played an encore;
And the bold Andy Keane sure he played as much more
And to finish he played 'Colonel Frazer'.

-- Sciddery-idle dom-diddery dom-diddery die dee.

From Wicklow and Carlow they all fell in line
And up from Portarlington came Johnny Ryan;
He resined his bow and he watched every line
And he won the first prize on the violin.
From Galway they came every man and his wife
With Eddie Moloney who played on the fife;
And young Kieran Collins would make the dead rise
When he played us 'The Lark in the Morning'.

There was music and song from all over Clare
The Macks of Crusheen and sure all the Mulkeres;

The Mike Preston Trio and Martin Mulhaire
Not forgetting the Mister Joe Leary.
Mrs Crotty she came all the way from Kilrush
She took a high note for the 'Bird on the Bush'
She played all the day and she never did blush
Twas 'Good Girl Yourself Mrs Crotty.'

-- Sciddery-idle dom-diddery dom-diddery die dee.

They came down from Quilty, to sing and to play
With big Martin Talty from Miltown Malbay
And our own Willie Clancy, he gave a display
Sure we know he's the King of the pipers,
Then somebody said, 'who's that man over there?'
Isn't that Jimmy Ward from the North side of Clare
He plays on the banjo with music to spare
For he plays with the great Kilfenora.

Now Peter O'Loughlin from Connolly came
He brought Paddy Murphy, twas all in the game;
They played a duet and they made a big name
For they won at the Fleadh down in Ennis.
And down from Bellharbour Chris Droney he came
He played on a matchbox I thought twas that same;
Till someone said "Robbie what's that you are saying'
Isn't that his own small Concertina.

-- Sciddery-idle dom-diddery dom-diddery die dee.

Our own Paddy Canny, he took oe'r the fair
He played through the streets and right up to the square;
Says Daniel O'Connell 'My Life on you there'
And I think you're the best of them all sure
And o'er from America more of them flew
And Paddy O'Brien, he was one of the few;
He'd played, the accordion you'd swear there were two
He got so many notes in together.

Now Ciaran MacMahon was busy bedad
Recording them all both the good and the bad;
But for him our music was gone to the bad
So 'tis welcome Ciaran MacMathuna.
'Tis all over now but 'twas something to see
So thanks to Sean Reid and the great committee;
So I wish you good health now and good luck from me
Until we all meet in Dungarvan.

McAlpine's Fusiliers (1) [5]

Did your mother come from Ireland and what part of Donegal?
You'll get rashers, eggs and bacon, you'll get anything at all
And for timbering and shuttering we'll give three ringing cheers
For Dan MacCann he's a handy man in MacAlpine's Fusiliers.

Now, my lads, this famous regiment all came from Irish Fair
We drove the Mersey tunnel and we sunk at Abervale
And it's for the FP headings we had plenty volunteers
We took the best and we sacked the rest in MacAlpine's Fusiliers.

Of course, no doubt, you've heard about our foremost ganger men
There is Tomber Tacky Roddy and the famous Darkie Finn[6]
And it's for one Joe McGeever we'll give three ringing cheers
He's a regimental sergeant major in MacAlpine's Fusiliers.

And as you walk along the bank sure you can plainly see
The mole skin and the navies knot as we all look 'pinsirly'
When the graft is tough we're all cat rough, we have to dread or fear
And 'tis in the pub we'll drink the sub with MacAlpine's Fusiliers.

We'll not forget the ould 'hay boys' with their fancy shirts and suits
We'll make them don the 'mole skins' with the yorks and navvie's boots
We'll make them do the distance like the old 'pinsirs' did for years
And we'll tear it out when we get the shout in MacAlpine's Fusiliers.

Now, here's good luck as we dig that much for we're all long distance men
Who've traveled down from Camden Town through Chorley and Bridge End
And one day we'll tramp for Downing Street to see the Lords and Peers
And it's on the map we'll fill the gap with MacAlpine's Fusiliers.

McAlpine's Fusiliers (2)[7]

O, as down the glen came McAlpine's men
With their shovels slung behind them,
'Twas in the pub they drink their sub
And out in the spike you'll find them;
They sweated blood and they washed down mud
With pints and quarts of beer
And now we're on the road again
With McAlpine's Fusiliers.

---

[5] This song is a tribute to the Irishmen who worked for the British construction contractor McAlpine. Martin John Henry (brother of Kevin Henry, interviewed for this study) wrote this version around 1942. The lyrics are reproduced here as they appear in Batty Sherlock & Thomas B. Ryan, *Ceol agus Cantan as Dumha 'Chaisil* (Dreoilín Community Arts, Achadh Mór, Co. Mayo, 2007), p.63.

[6] According to Ultan Cowley, Darkie (or Darky) Finn was a neighbour of Martin Henry's from Cloontia near Doocastle.

[7] This version, recorded by Dominic Behan in 1961, is significantly different from the first (essentially a different song with the same title). It was subsequently recorded and popularized by the Dubliners.

I stripped to the skin with Darky Finn
Way down upon the Isle of Grain;
With Horse-Face Toole, then I knew the rule:
No money if you stopped for rain.
Well, McAlpine's God was a well filled hod,
Your shoulders cut to bits and seared,
And woe to he who looked for tea
With McAlpine's Fusiliers.

I remember the day that the Bear O'Shea
Fell into a concrete stairs;
What Horse-Face said when he saw him dead,
Well, it wasn't what the rich call prayers.
"I'm a navvy short" was the one retort
That reached unto my ears.
When the going is rough, well, you must be tough
With McAlpine's Fusiliers.

I've worked till the sweat near has me beat
With Russian, Czech and Pole
On shuttering jams up in the hydro dams
Or underneath the Thames in a hole;
I grafted hard and I got me cards
And many a ganger's fist across me ears;
If you pride your life, don't join, by Christ,
With McAlpine's Fusiliers.

Men of '39[8]

Come all you pincher kiddies and all long distance men[9]
You may be over in this land nine years or maybe ten
You may have tramped this country o'er from Plymoth to the Tyne
But there's not a word about the boys that came in '39

There's not a word about the lads came from old Kinsale
And took the road to Dublin from Dun Laoghaire they did sail
The man up in the Globe Hotel he gave them the 'Ol' Grand'
Saying good luck upon you, Paddy, with your passport in your hand

Some of those pincher kiddies came when England needed men
His catchword was to catch them for the famous Darky Finn
To slave behind the mixer until your skin turned tan
And to say good on you, Paddy, with the passport in your hand

[8] As sung by Michael Falsey from Quilty, Co. Clare. Jim Carroll & Pat Mackenzie Collection, Irish Traditional Music Archive, Dublin
[9] The names 'pincher kiddies' and 'long distance men' are used for navvies who travelled from job to job.

We traveled up from Liverpool down to sunny Cornwall
We got off the bus and scarpered when the bombs began to fall
As Hitler with his doodlebugs upon us he did land
We tote the gun with our gas masks on and our passports in our hands

We worked along the slipways and the runways and the docks
And the fourteen blue card numbers soon had us on the rocks
We prayed to God in Heaven above and for de Valera's band
And we'll cast our vote and take the boat to Erin's lovely land

Now all of you who stayed at home and never crossed the pond
And didn't work for Wimpey, McAlpine or John Laing
Or slave behind the mixer until your skin is tan
And to say good on you, Paddy, with the passport in your hand

Now our six months is nearly up and we'll be going home
We'll tell the welfare officer we never more will roam
We'll say farewell to all the girls we met up in the Strand
And we'll bid adieu and change at Crewe with our passports in our hands.

Murphy's Volunteers[10]

'Twas in the year of '39 in a place called London Town
The German planes were circling and sending shrapnel down
Paddy he was tearing up the roads of England
John Murphy's men were on the march with a pickaxe in their hand.

CHORUS:
Oh Murphy you're the devil, you're leading me astray
Down the sewers of London Town for 15 bob a day
My poor old heart is broken I'm sobbing bitter tears
I'll tell you Pat, 'tis a hard old whack with Murphy's Volunteers

Come on, come on says Elephant John and swing that blessed pick
For this is no place for invalids, for cripples or the sick
Forget the Germans overhead, they're only playing a bout
So bend your backs lads, that's the craic and dig those trenches out

I think we're daft says Hook-nosed Jack, to dig down here at all
Oh bedad you're right says the Greyhound White, the man from Donegal
The mud down here is hard as rock says Cockney Joe McLeod
We'll call the Germans down a while, they'll bomb the basket out

CHORUS

One day the Horse Moloney found the German down the hole

[10] Written by Sean McCarthy for Mick Treacy (interview with the author, 3 April 2013), who recorded it on an LP in Dublin in 1968.

Oh good day says Horse, how do you do? The German shouted Heil
Well Heil me eye says the Pig Molloy, no more of your old bout
You're working for John Murphy now, you're digging trenches out

John Murphy is a dacent man as everybody knows
We're very happy down the sewers and smelling like a rose
We like the porter strong and black, the whiskey and the beer
You'll get no prunes or caviar with Murphy's Volunteers

CHORUS

The Rocks of Bawn[11]

Come all you loyal heroes wherever that you be
Don't work for any master, 'til you know what your work will be,
For you must rise up early, from clear daylight 'til dawn
And I'm afraid you'll never be able to plough the rocks of Bawn.

Oh rise up lovely Sweeney and give your horse some hay
And give him a good feed of oats, before you go away
Don't feed him on soft turnip, put him out on your green lawn
Or I'm afraid he'll never be able to plough the rocks of Bawn.

And my curse attend you Sweeney, you have me nearly robbed
You're sitting by the fireside with a *duidín* in your gob
You're sitting by the fireside from clear daylight 'til dawn
And I'm afraid you'll never be able to plough the rocks of Bawn.

And my shoes they are well worn now, my stockings they are thin
My heart is always trembling, afraid I might give in
My heart is always trembling, from the clear daylight 'til the dawn
And I'm afraid I'll never be able to plough the rocks of Bawn

And I wish the Queen of England would send for me in time
And place me in some regiment, all in my youth and prime
I would fight for Ireland's glory from the clear daylight 'til the dawn
And I never would return again to plough the rocks of Bawn.

The Shores of Amerikay[12]

I'm bidding farewell to the land of my youth
and the home I love so well.
And the mountains so grand round my own native land,
I'm bidding them all farewell.
With an aching heart I'll bid them adieu

[11] Traditional, as sung by Joe Heaney on *Irish Music in London Pubs* (Smithsonian Folkways Records, FG3575, 1965).
[12] Traditional song. Different versions of the lyrics exist.

for tomorrow I'll sail far away,
O'er the raging foam for to seek a home
on the shores of Amerikay.

It's not for the want of employment I'm going,
It's not for the love of fame,
That fortune bright may shine over me
and give me a glorious name.
It's not for the want of employment I'm going
o'er the weary and stormy sea,
But to seek a home for my own true love,
on the shores of Amerikay.

And when I am bidding my last farewell
the tears like rain will blind,
To think of my friends in my own native land,
and the home I'm leaving behind.
But if I'm to die in a foreign land
and be buried so far far away
No fond mother's tears will be shed o'er my grave
on the shores of Amerikay.

Sweet Kingwilliamstown[13]

My bonny barque bounds light and free
Across the surging foam
And takes me far from Inisfail
To seek a foreign home
A lonely exile driven ‘neath
Misfortune’s cold cold frown
Far from my home and cherished friends
Round sweet Kingwilliamstown.

Whilst here upon the deck I stand
And watch the fading shore
Fond thoughts arise within my mind
Of friends I’ll ne’er see more
Of moonlit eves and pleasant hours
While fast the sun goes down
Still thinking on my friends who dwell
Round sweet Kingwilliamstown.

Shall I no more gaze on the shore
Or roam the mountains wild
Or stray along Blackwater banks
Where I strayed when a child

[13] As sung by Jimmy O’Brien, interview with the author, 11 April 2012. It is said to have been composed by a Kerryman named Dan Buckley who survived the sinking of the Titanic.

To watch the sun o'er Knocknaboul
Light up the heather brown
Before she flings her farewell beams
O'er sweet Kingwilliamstown.

I know not yet but fondly hope
Where e'er my footsteps roam
But cherish deeply in my heart
All thoughts of love and home
Now fades the shore and o'er my soul
The night comes slowly down
May God be with you Ireland
Farewell Kingwilliamstown.

The Tunnel Tigers[14]

Hares run free on the Wicklow mountains,
wild geese fly and the foxes play;
sporting Wicklow boys are working,
driving a tunnel through the London clay.

CHORUS:
Up with the shields and jack it! Ram it!
Drive a tunnel through the London clay.

Lough Derg trout grow fat and lazy,
salmon sport in Cushla bay;
and fishermen from Connemara
drive a tunnel through the London clay.

Below Armagh the wild ducks breeding,
wild fowl gather on Loch Rea,
the sporting boys of Longford County
are digging a tunnel through the London clay.

The curragh rots on the Achill Island,
tourists walk on the Newport quay;
the Mayo boys have all gone roving,
digging a tunnel through the London clay.

The Carlow girls are fine and handsome,
all decked out so neat and gay;
the Carlow boys don't come to court 'em
they're driving a tunnel through the London clay.

[14] Words written by Ewan MacColl and set to the traditional air of 'Willie Taylor'. It appears on the soundtrack of Philip Donnellan's 1965 film *The Irishmen: An Impression of Exile*.

Down in the dark are the tunnel tigers
far from the sun and the light of day;
down in the land that the sea once buried,
driving a tunnel through the London clay.

You Can Talk About Your Concrete[15]

You can talk about your concrete and the boys who work the train
And the fellows on the hoppers in the sun and wind and rain
But the boys who laid the blacktop, you'd want to see them belt
When they're working on the highway laying hot asphalt

CHORUS:
We've laid in the hollows and we've laid it on the flat
If it doesn't last forever then I swear I'll eat me hat
I traveled up and down the world and sure I never felt
Any surface that was equal to the hot asphalt

There were boys from Connemara, County Mayo and Kildare
And the Sligo pincher kiddies, sure old Ireland was there
We was working all around the clock, you should've seen us belt
We was racing up the highway laying hot asphalt

CHORUS

We spread it in the summer and we rolled it nice and hot
Two million yards or more of it, we had to roll the lot
And the sun was blazing down on us, I thought me back would melt
Working on the motor highway laying hot asphalt

CHORUS

When you're speeding in your motorcar and tearing through the shires
And the only thing you're hearing is the humming of your tires
You'll be riding soft and easy with the road as smooth as felt
And it's don't forget the boys who laid the hot asphalt

CHORUS

[15] Written by Ewan MacColl in 1959 for the BBC radio ballad *Song of a Road*. It is sung to a traditional melody. Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker & Peggy Seeger, *Song of a Road*, BBC radio ballad, 1959 (Topic Records, 2008).

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