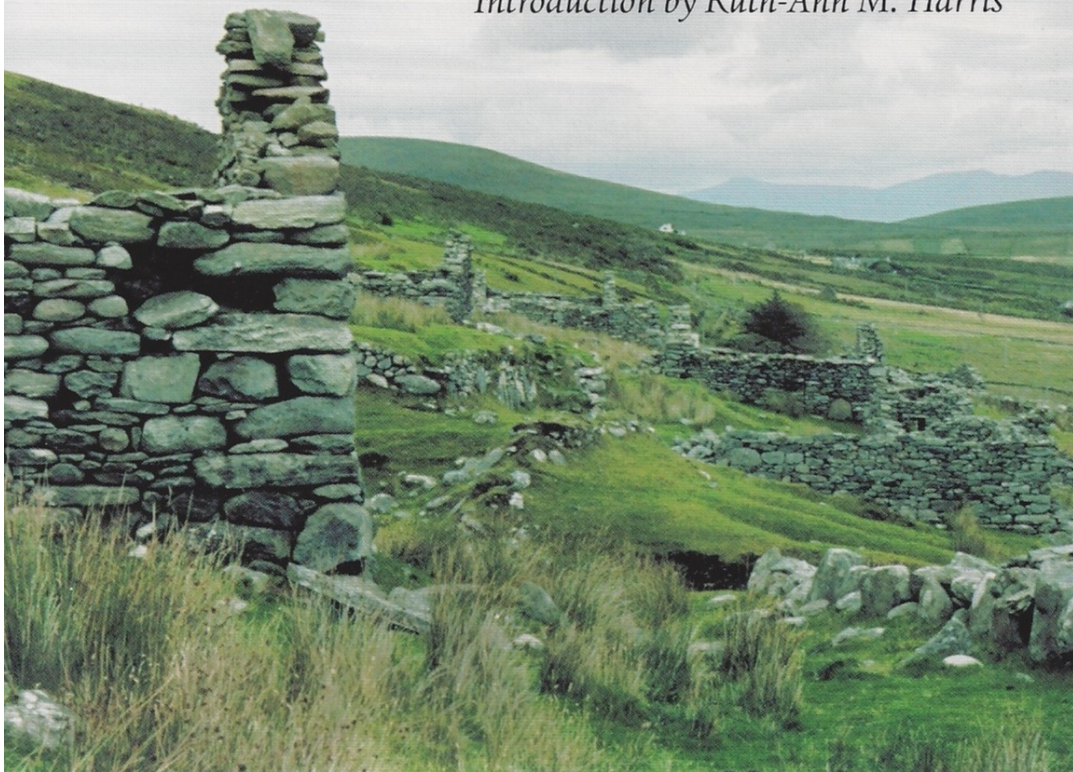


THE GREAT
FAMINE AND
THE IRISH
DIASPORA
IN AMERICA

Edited by ARTHUR GRIBBEN

Introduction by Ruth-Ann M. Harris



Between 1845 and 1855, nearly 1.5 million Irish women, men, and children sailed to America to escape the Great Famine, triggered by successive years of potato blight. The famine and resulting emigration had a profound impact not only on the history of Ireland, but on that of England and North America as well. This volume of original essays commemorates the 150th anniversary of these epochal events and sheds new light on both the consequences of the famine and the experience of the Irish in America.

“This book is a major contribution to its field. It contains important details that are missing from many of the previous works on the subject of the famine. The scholarship is sound, and is often based on primary sources that have never been examined in this context before. The data are consistently compelling, fresh, and well documented. . . . Any college with an Irish studies program will find the book indispensable.”—MARY ELLEN COHANE, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

“A fascinating collection of essays that reveals, in often unexpected ways, the effects of the Irish famine on both sides of the Atlantic. Ranging from the loss of life to the loss of music among the Irish peasantry, from the pages of the *Dublin University Magazine* to the pages of American newspapers, from Chef Alex Soyer’s famine soup to the famine graves at Grosse Ile, from Irish memory to Irish American rage, this scholarly but readable book provides us with the broadest understanding to date of this far-reaching event.”
—WILLIAM H. A. WILLIAMS, author of *'Twas Only an Irishman’s Dream*

ARTHUR GRIBBEN teaches English at California State University, Northridge.
RUTH-ANN M. HARRIS is adjunct professor of history and Irish studies at Boston College.

Cover design by Jack Harrison

Cover photo: Deserted village, Achill Island

University of Massachusetts Press
Amherst 01004

ISBN 1-55849-173-2



9 781558 491731

This book is published with the support and cooperation of the University of Massachusetts Boston and the California Branch of the American Irish Historical Society

Copyright © 1999 by the University of Massachusetts Press
All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

LC 98-8432

ISBN 1-55849-172-4 (cloth): 173-2 (pbk.)

Designed by Dennis Anderson

Set in Monotype Dante by Graphic Composition, Inc.

Printed and bound by BookCrafters

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The great famine and the Irish diaspora in America / edited by Arthur Gribben ; introduction by Ruth-Ann Harris.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

Contents: Women and the great famine / Patricia Lysaght — A Tory periodical in a time of famine / Wayne Hall — Alexis Soyer and the Irish famine / Jillian Strang and Joyce Toomre — The transfer of land and the emergence of the graziers during the famine period / David S. Jones — The great famine / Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin — Grosse Île / Michael Quigley — The famine beat / Neil Hogan — Revenge for Skibbereen / Kerby Miller — The pauper and the politician / Kerby A. Miller and Bruce D. Boling — The famine and collective memory / Mick Mulcrone — The great famine / Christine Kinealy.

ISBN 1-55849-172-4 (cloth : alk. paper). — ISBN 1-55849-173-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Famines—Ireland—History—19th century. 2. Ireland—Emigration and immigration—History—19th century. 3. Ireland—History—1837-1901. 4. Irish Americans—History. I. Gribben, Arthur.

DA950.7.G735 1999

94I.508—DC2I

98-8432
CIP

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data are available.

Contents

	Preface	ix
I	Introduction RUTH-ANN M. HARRIS	I
2	Women and the Great Famine: Vignettes from the Irish Oral Tradition PATRICIA LYSAGHT	21
3	A Tory Periodical in a Time of Famine: The <i>Dublin University Magazine</i> , 1845–1850 WAYNE HALL	48
4	Alexis Soyer and the Irish Famine: “Splendid Promises and Abortive Measures” JILLIAN STRANG AND JOYCE TOOMRE	66
5	The Transfer of Land and the Emergence of the Graziers during the Famine Period DAVID S. JONES	85
6	The Great Famine: A Catalyst in Irish Traditional Music Making GEARÓID Ó HALLMHURÁIN	104
7	Grosse Île: Canada’s Famine Memorial MICHAEL QUIGLEY	133
8	The Famine Beat: American Newspaper Coverage of the Great Hunger NEIL HOGAN	155

viii Contents

9	“Revenge for Skibbereen”: Irish Emigration and the Meaning of the Great Famine KERBY A. MILLER	180
10	The Pauper and the Politician: A Tale of Two Immigrants and the Construction of Irish-American Society KERBY A. MILLER AND BRUCE D. BOLING	196
11	The Famine and Collective Memory: The Role of the Irish-American Press in the Early Twentieth Century MICK MULCRONE	219
12	The Great Irish Famine—A Dangerous Memory? CHRISTINE KINEALY	239
	Notes on Contributors	255
	Index	261

The Great Famine

A Catalyst in Irish Traditional Music Making

THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY of the Great Irish Famine has yielded an unprecedented wealth of publications from academic communities on both sides of the North Atlantic. While many of these have rekindled the polemics of revisionism and nationalism, others have sought to expose the complex nuances of the tragedy through an examination of nontraditional historiographical sources. Recent work on the folkloric and literary evidence has thrown considerable light on the catastrophe from the *gemeinschaft* perspective of the Famine victims.¹ Similarly, regional surveys by historical geographers, economists, and historical anthropologists have emphasized the spatially selective impact of the Famine—which found its primary victims among the *clachan* communities in the west of Ireland.² Pitted within a cross-disciplinary perspective, the present study will explore the impact of the Great Famine on Irish traditional music makers, their folk repertoires, and above all their relationship with an audience that was changed irrevocably by starvation, death, and diaspora.

Different perhaps from the official chronicles of the period, the *gemeinschaft* insight of the music maker offers a unique picture of Irish society undergoing one of the most brutal mass fatalities in modern European history. Although meager in content, the immediate song evidence in Irish for the period 1845–1852 focuses ostensibly on the interwoven themes of mortality, destitution, and emigration from the inside perspective of the victims. Later on, the canon of emigration ballads, particularly those which were popularized in urban America in the decades after the Famine, reveals a poignant sorrow in the wake of tragedy, together with a retrospective politicization of the calamity in the immigrant mindset. Traditional music makers were particularly affected by the Famine cataclysm

and the subsequent diaspora of which they were part.³ Thousands died with the immediate onslaught of starvation and disease, while others followed their audiences into exile in the New World. Those who were fortunate enough to survive and chose to remain in Ireland had to adapt to a new economic and cultural ethos which for the most part was radically different from the pre-Famine intimacy of the *clachan*—a nucleated cluster of farmhouses with communal holdings—and the townland, which sustained an indigenous corps of folk poets, dancing masters, and traveling musicians. Folkloric evidence is explicit in its treatment of pipers, fiddlers, and dancing masters ending their days in the workhouse, while contemporary collectors of traditional music reflect sadly on the silence that had been inflicted on the land of song by the Famine tragedy.⁴ A century and a half after the Great Famine, the topography of traditional music making in the west of Ireland still bears the cultural scars of rural depopulation, while its dialectic landscape still mirrors the changes in land use that were imposed by the profit economics of post-Famine farming.⁵ Any evaluation of the Famine as a watershed in Irish traditional music must contrast the pre-Famine environment of the music maker with that of his post-Famine successor. While focusing on the musician as an artistic figure in rural Ireland, it is critical to consider the extent to which this anonymous artist—who was both a performer and a folk composer—not only mirrors the Famine in his repertoire, but also tailors his craft to meet the exigencies of a new political and moral order in the wake of the tragedy.

Traditional Music and Song before the Famine

Contemporary chroniclers in the decades prior to the Famine left an eclectic set of records of Irish social life. Census commissioners and geographers, land valuers and colonial novelists, each in their own way drew attention to the enduring realities of poverty, social disaffection, and land hunger.⁶ Travelers from England and mainland Europe also contributed to this mosaic of commentary and observation. Although collectors of traditional music, like Edward Bunting, George Petrie, and William Forde (the latter who collected for Patrick Weston Joyce), traveled extensively among rural communities in the years prior to the Famine, their focus was primarily musicological. Their published collections contain a variety of dance tunes, traditional airs, songs, and harp compositions, albeit in western art classical format. With the exception of Petrie and Joyce, the

collectors were not concerned enough to tender a critical appraisal of the cultural environments of the traditional performers from whom they transcribed.⁷ While the peasant collections of Bunting were being appropriated by Romantic nationalists like Thomas Moore and anglicized for a drawing-room populace, other less myopic observers were turning their attention to the hereditary keepers of music in rural Ireland. Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Carter Hall, who traveled throughout Ireland in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, have left a perceptive account of the dilemmas facing some uilleann pipers in the wake of Father Theobald Matthew's temperance crusade in the 1830s. Recounting their meeting with Rory Oge, a piper in Killaloe, county Clare, they recall:

We followed the music, and after walking through a gathering crowd . . . we made our way into a tent, and were there introduced, not to the bard of the brave Brien, but to his successor, the village piper, and, perhaps one of the last of his *original* race—for the class is rapidly “going out;” faction-fights have altogether ceased, and dances are now-a-days, few and far between. The piper finds it a hard matter to live by his music. But his worse “enemies” are the “brass-bands” of the Temperance Societies; they are now becoming so numerous as to be found nearly in every town, and at the time of which we write, had attained sufficient popularity to make the old pipers, and their adherents, tremble for the results.⁸

In extolling the graces of the Temperance Society's brass bands, however, the authors add their own evangelical epilogue to their critique. They favor the building of humble assembly rooms to house temperance society meetings and recommend the circulation of instructive books to educate the victims of whiskey. Above all, they hope that the brass bands will increase:

for the wonderful change that has been wrought in the habits of the people has unquestionably driven the piper and the fiddler out of fashion: and any mode of giving amusement extensively should be carefully encouraged. Indeed, it is absolutely necessary that some healthful excitement should be introduced to replace the unhealthy excitement formerly induced by whiskey.⁹

In contrast to these detailed if chiding observations of the Halls, Capode Feuillide's interpretation of the role of the traditional musician is somewhat more discriminating. A journalist and literary critic writing at the height of the Romantic Movement in France, de Feuillide traveled throughout Ireland in 1837. His two-volume *l'Irlande*, pitched ostensibly

within a prevailing climate of Romantic scholarship, was published in France in 1839. Echoing the sociopolitical tenets of his contemporary, Gustave de Beaumont, de Feuillide devotes considerable attention to the musical and literary traditions of the west of Ireland.¹⁰ An implicit negligence and indifference toward the Irish language as a vehicle of music making characterized much of the Romantic nationalist movement in pre-Famine Ireland. This is particularly underlined in de Feuillide's work. Mindful of the complex cultural tensions between Irish-speaking rural communities and the colonial exterior, de Feuillide is critical of Thomas Moore's usurpation of songs in the Irish language. He posits that "*quant au peuple, il ne sait pas ce que c'est que Thomas Moore.*"¹¹ He laments the passing of the harp, which has ceded its place to the piano in the drawing rooms of the ascendancy and, in the thatched houses of *le peuple*, to the uilleann pipes. Spending much of his time with Irish-speaking fishing communities in Connemara, de Feuillide noted the words of songs that he had dictated to him by his hosts. Reflecting on his experiences, he excuses himself humbly for not being able to transcribe their melodies.¹² Yet he describes in sensitive detail the nocturnal ambiance of the *ra-gairne*—house session—when community elders gathered around the turf fire to share their songs and dances.¹³

If, as Capo de Feuillide suggests, "*dans la langue du pays, poète et musicien sont synonymes, le mot barde, à lui seul, signifie l'un et l'autre,*" the sociological insight proffered by the Cork poet Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin throws significant light on the living conditions and social outlook of some traditional musicians in pre-Famine Munster.¹⁴ In the bleak despondency of his poem "*Fuacht na Scailpe-Se,*" written in 1823 and translated from Gaelic here, he portrays an abysmal world of misery and hopelessness:

Fuacht na scailpe-se, deatach is gaoth gheimhridh, cruas na leapa-sa 's easpa brait lae 's oíche, muarchuid teacsanna, deachmhaithe 's glaoch cíosa, tug buartha cathach mé, easpaitheach éagointeach. ¹⁵	The coldness of this sod hut, smoke and winter wind, the hardness of this bed and the lack of a mantle day and night, an abundance of taxes, tithes and rent calls, filled me with sad lamentation, wanting and mournful.
---	--

While the physical hardships of Ó Longáin's environment correspond with similar portrayals by the Halls, Gustave de Beaumont, Capo de Feu-

illide, and others during the following decades, not all traditional performers shared his fate. In 1839, collector George Petrie, whose commentaries were heavily influenced by the Romantic Movement, reminds us that uilleann piper Patrick Conelly, one of his principal sources of music in Galway, lived in tolerably comfortable circumstances. According to Petrie, Conelly had a high opinion of his musical talents, and a strong feeling of decent pride. He played only for strong farmers and gentry, and would not lower his dignity by playing in a tap room. Blind from infancy, yet mindful of his superior status, Conelly would perform for commoners only on rare occasions.¹⁶ But what of the communal entertainment of these commoners from whom Conelly dissociated in the late 1830s? It is clear that by now the new fashion of set dancing had become a vibrant pastime among these lower social orders.

Folkloric evidence suggests that quadrilles were introduced into Irish rural communities by soldiers returning from the Napoleonic wars. Evolving into traditional set dancing, these reached their apogee in the years between the end of hostilities and the onset of the Great Famine. Their popularity was such that even the Knight of Glin in West Limerick gave orders that dancing masters within his domain should teach this new dance form as it was danced in France and Portugal.¹⁷ Various adaptations of quadrille figures developed during the 1830s and 1840s. The most prominent of these were the "Lancers," the "Plain Set," and the "Caledonian," the latter of which was believed to have been introduced into county Clare by Scottish sappers who came to work there for the ordnance survey commission. Other supposedly urban adaptations of the quadrille were the "Orange and Green," the "Paris Set," and the "Televara." Rivaling established solo dances, these new dance forms were propagated by dancing masters who were to be found among all social classes on the eve of the Famine. Writing in *The Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator* on November 8, 1867, historian and journalist Maurice Lenihan (1800–1895) recalled some of the dancing masters who were popular in his youth:

In my youth the elder Garbois was the leading man in the South of Ireland as a teacher. Some used to say that he gallicised his name to appear fashionable, and that his real apostrophe was the old Irish one of Garvey. . . . He never appeared at school-hours except in full dress. His hair, which he wore in dark profusion, was oiled and curled and parted in the style of the Prince Regent. . . . The old dancing master . . . occupies a middle place between the fashionable Terpsichorean professor of the present day and

cut and shuffle, à la Donnybrook, while preparing young boys and girls for the Sunday dance, at “cakes” or fairs, and who had been admirably described by William Carleton as performing on an unhinged door, or “welling the flure” in the village alehouse.¹⁸

Occasions of music making in rural Ireland prior to the Famine followed the cyclical calendar of the agricultural year. *Imbolg* (the feast of St. Brigit), *Bealtaine* (Mayday), *Lughnasa* (festival of the god Lugh in late July or early August), and *Samhain* (Halloween) marked the main coordinates of this cycle. Communal sowing, harvesting, and potato digging were planned in relation to climatic conditions on or around these feasts.¹⁹ The completion of these time-honored rituals was usually celebrated with traditional music and dancing as the *meitheal*—cooperative workforce—of neighbors and extended kin congregated in *clachan* kitchens and at flagstone hearths. These celebrations often coincided with race meetings, fairs, and hurling matches. With the exception of patron days, orthodox Catholic festivals did not enjoy the same prominence as they did in post-Famine Ireland.²⁰ The custom of “hunting the wren” on St. Stephen’s Day, which marked a high point in the musical calendar, was popular enough to merit a journal entry from Elizabeth Smith of Blessington, county Wicklow, in 1840.

A regular reveille—The Wren—under our windows. What can have been the origin of this strange custom? Is it St. Stephen’s day—the first martyr, who was stoned to death—and what has a little harmless bird to do with that? They hunt the poor little thing to death, then set it on a pole, fix a kind of bower around it and then carry it all over the country with musick and dancing and all of them dressed up with all the rags and ribbons and bits of coloured paper they can collect.²¹

On the eve of the Famine, patron days were celebrated with music and dancing as well as by various religious rituals and superstitions. In keeping with an internal matrix of townland traditions, values, and ritual associations, local saints were venerated at holy wells, at sacred trees and cairns, or at the site of an early Christian monastery. Although attracting musicians and dancers from their immediate hinterlands as well as traveling pipers and peddlers from afar, these quasi-religious festivities appear to have degenerated into excessive drinking and faction fighting in many

Chicago recalled that tents that sold refreshments at these pattern days had a resident piper to play for dancing when repentant customers had completed their "rounds" at the blessed well.²²

Wakes and weddings were also occasions of music making. While the former were mainly the preserve of the *mná caointe* or professional keeners, the latter attracted a full complement of musicians, singers, and dancers—with pride of place going to the piper, whose presence was more important than "common" fiddlers and flute players. In his *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825–28), Thomas Crofton Croker notes that the best room at the wedding was reserved for the bride and bridegroom, the priest, the piper, and the more respectable guests like the local landlord and neighboring gentry. After the wedding, two collections were taken up, one for the priest and one for the piper.

There is little doubt that the piper enjoyed superior status among traditional musicians prior to the famine. His veneer of social prestige was based to some degree on archaic precedents established by the native harpers—whose demise at the end of the eighteenth century was counterpointed ironically by the rise in prominence of uilleann pipers. As the music collector Edward Bunting scurried to salvage the last of the native harp music in the 1790s, the uilleann or union pipes had reached their present state of development combining drones, chanter, and regulators to create what some commentators called the "Irish organ." Published music and instructional tutors for the pipes followed shortly afterward. In filling a musical void left by the harpers, the piper became the keeper of ancient airs, clan marches, and piping pieces often written as personal eulogies for his patrons. Beneath this quasi-aristocratic repertoire was a thriving mass of dance music played for set dancers by an anonymous corps of flute players, fiddlers, and whistle players. In the absence of instrumental music, sets were also danced to *portaireacht* or mouth music, which contained verses sung to the airs of common jigs, reels, and polkas. The latter practice survived in some isolated parts of the west of Ireland down to the present century.

Although many rural communities may have had their own resident musicians, itinerant dancing masters and pipers appear to have enjoyed considerable standing in western townlands. Both were carriers of news as well as social entertainment, and their arrival in a rural community generally prompted a *ragairne*—house dance—or *swaree*.²³ On the one hand, dancing masters stayed in a district long enough to teach a number

of basic steps and figure dances and were given lodgings by one of their patrons in return for free tuition. The itinerant piper, on the other hand, tended to be a more mobile figure and was less bound to a settled clientele than his dancing cohort. Both followed regular circuits that were tailored to suit the cyclical work year of their audience. Walking distance was a critical factor in measuring the length of a circuit, and blind pipers often traveled in the company of a child upon whom they depended for guidance from place to place.

While the diversity of dance music and the status afforded to its performers attest to the popularity of solo and set dancing, the songs of the period offer a more penetrating index of social life in pre-Famine Ireland. Love songs constituted the most popular class of folk songs in Irish since the demise of the bardic schools in the seventeenth century. The collections made in the decades prior to the Famine confirm that love songs like “*Dónal Óg*,” “*Úna Bhán*,” and “*Saileog Ruadh*” still enjoyed considerable popularity among Irish-speaking communities. All moods and emotions, “from the simple delight of the uncomplicated courtship to the numbed resignation following separation,” are expressed in these songs.²⁴ Ironically, patriotic songs like “*Cáit Ní Dhuibhir*,” “*Róisín Dubh*,” and “*An Druimín Donn Dilis*” were particularly scarce in Irish.²⁵ *Laoithe Fiannaíochta* (Fenian lays) was another genre of popular song to survive in Irish down until the Great Famine. Recounting the adventures of the mythological Fionn and the Fianna, the *laoithe* were filled with otherworldly creatures, enchanted ladies, invasions, and foreign expeditions.

Recalling his childhood in pre-Famine Clare, Eugene O’Curry proffers the following glance at the *laoithe* and their audience:

I have heard my father sing these Ossianic poems, and remember distinctly the air and manner of their singing; and I have heard that there was a man named Anthony O’Brien, a schoolmaster, who spent much of his time in my father’s house, and who was the best singer of Oisín’s poems that his contemporaries had ever heard. He had a rich and powerful voice, and often, on a calm summer day, he used to go with a party into a boat on the river Shannon, at my native place, where the river is eight miles wide . . . On which occasions Anthony O’Brien was always prepared to sing his choicest pieces, among which were no greater favorites than Oisín’s poems.²⁶

The remaining store of songs in Irish was comprised of working songs, religious songs, the *caoineadh* or lament, humorous and satirical songs, as

well as lullabies and children's recreational songs. Among the genres of Irish songs to perish during the Great Famine were songs of the supernatural. Fairy lore was an indigenous feature of Irish-speaking communities, whose songs acted as natural carriers of that tradition. The work of Petrie and O'Curry gives extensive coverage to songs of fairy abduction, changelings, and musical exchanges with the fairies. Both testify to the ardor of these beliefs among rural communities throughout the west of Ireland.²⁷

The dispersal of English throughout most of the country during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was precipitated by a major loss of traditional songs in Irish. Just as new dance forms replaced old ones, songs in English as well as bilingual macaronic songs had begun to replace songs in Irish in many parts of the west of Ireland by the 1840s. Both traditions, however, appear to have coexisted in some port hinterlands like Kilrush, Dungarvan, and Galway, where adjacent *Gaeltacht* communities prolonged the lifespan of Irish songs.²⁸

Musicologist Breandán Breathnach has pointed out that folk songs in the English language fall broadly into two categories, namely, English and Lowland Scottish and Anglo-Irish songs, both of which genres enjoyed considerable popularity on the eve of the Famine. The first and older genre was brought to Ireland initially by English and Lowland Scottish settlers during the seventeenth-century plantations, and were reinforced by Irish navvies, tattie hookers, and bothy bands during the past two centuries.²⁹ On the one hand, many ballads were also dispersed through ballad sheets printed in England and circulated in Dublin and other towns along the east coast.³⁰ Songs that reached post-Famine audiences in this way include "Lord Baker," "Captain Wedderburn's Courtship," and "Barbara Allen." Anglo-Irish folk songs, on the other hand, were composed by Irish people whose mother tongue was English. One noticeable feature of these compositions in the decades prior to the Famine was a growing preoccupation with authorship. Unlike orally transmitted songs in Irish—in which authorship was an obscure concept—the Anglo-Irish ballad is frequently indexed according to its author and his agenda, hence its importance in the literary accomplishments of figures like Thomas Moore, whose Regency lyrics helped to gentrify Irish music in the early 1800s.³¹ In contrast to the Irish-speaking folk composers from whom he culled traditional melodies, Moore claimed that his drawing-room songs, with

their stage-Irish effusions of *mavourneens* and *acushlas*, were composed for “the pianofortes of the rich and educated.”³²

As with the older corpus of folk songs in Irish, love songs predominated in this newer genre, while every political movement from the rising of 1798 to the outbreak of the Great Famine had its own corps of balladeers. On the eve of the Famine, the writers of *The Nation*, which had been established by the Young Irelanders in 1842, set out to generate a new era in ballad compositions. *The Times* of London described their poems and ballads as being far more dangerous than the speeches of O’Connell. As well as attempting to rally popular support for rebellion, their songs helped to politicize the Famine catastrophe and, as such, enjoyed considerable patronage among middle-class nationalists on both sides of the North Atlantic throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.³³

Like composers of seditious songs, singers of seditious songs were considered equally guilty by the legal system in pre-Famine Ireland. Reminiscent of former edicts against pipers, rhymers, and harpers, court depositions for the period 1798–1841 contain an abundance of records of ballad sellers who plied their wares at street corners and marketplaces throughout the country. In his seminal work, *Narrative Singing in Ireland: Lays, Ballads, Come-All-Yes and Other Songs*, Hugh Shields provides the following account of ballad singer Denis Sheehan, who claimed that “the young persons of the country” had a strong preference for his more seditious ballads. On May 4, 1841, Sheehan was arrested

for singing “The Brave Spalpeen Fanough”. Over a period of sixteen months from January 1840, he says he ranged through the towns of Munster and the West Midlands: Thurles, Cashel, where he bought a pound’s worth of ballads for four shillings, Tipperary, Limerick, where he spent four months, Ennis, Gort, Loughrea, Ballinasloe, Athlone, Roscommon, Boyle, Tuam, Galway, Ballinasloe, Birr, Nenagh, Limerick, where he spent another six months, Tralee, where he got married, Macroom, Cork, Bandon and Dunmanway, where he got arrested.³⁴

While the English language was making strong inroads as a musical vernacular in urban areas, most communities in western townlands were still conducting their music making through the medium of Irish. In one count, there were approximately 62,205 townlands in pre-Famine Ireland, some consisting of one or two houses on one-acre plots. The average three-hundred-acre rural townland, however, contained fifteen to thirty

families, most of whom were related and shared common surnames.³⁵ In appraising the cultural landscape of these townlands in the 1840s, historian Robert James Scally has pointed out:

Regional differences in their size, their wealth, and building styles undoubtedly existed and distinguished the poorest from the more prosperous and from those that had been more or less transformed by the intrusion of commerce and goods radiating from the metropolis. Virtually all had felt the effects of these influences to some degree before the famine, especially those within the immediate orbit of the port and the market town. But even in these the persistence of traditional areas in material and mental life remained quite stubborn until hunger and emigration transformed them forever.³⁶

On the eve of the Famine, social organization in the isolated uplands, blanket bogs, and shoreline settlements of the west of Ireland was influenced unambiguously by the rural *clachan*. The *clachan*—or *baile*—was a nucleated cluster of farmhouses within which holdings were organized communally, “frequently on a townland basis and often with considerable ties of kinship between the families involved.”³⁷ Life within these communities was underpinned precariously by a potato diet, lazy bed cultivation, and a scattering of rundale plots which allowed land of varying quality to be shared by the community on an egalitarian basis. These rundale *clachan* housed nearly three-quarters of the population of Ireland prior to the Famine.³⁸ Historical geographer Kevin Whelan has pointed out:

This type of settlement became practically universal on the poorer lands of the west of Ireland in the pre-famine period. They were an ingenious adaptation to the environmental conditions of the west of Ireland, where tiny patches of glacial drift were frequently embedded in extensive areas of bog or mountain. Collective use of the infield maximized utilization of the limited amount of arable land provided by those drift pockets. . . . Economic development, underpinned by the potato, rundale and *clachan*, and the lazy bed, engineered a massive shift in population density from east to west, from good land to poor land, and from port hinterlands and river valleys to bog and hill fringes. . . . The new areas of settlement were concentrated along the ragged Atlantic fringe, and on bog and hill edges. Rundale villages, powered by the potato, acted as a mobile pioneering fringe; the spade and the spud conquered the contours.³⁹

Judging by the itineraries of the great collectors, and especially those of George Petrie and Eugene O’Curry in the period 1821–1857, it would

appear that much of the traditional music collected in rural Ireland prior to the Famine was acquired from *clachan*-based informants. This is evident in the extensive corpus of dance music and song which Petrie published from informants on the Iorris Peninsula in southwest Clare, Connemara, Mayo, the Iveragh Peninsula in Southwest Kerry and the blanket boglands of west Limerick. Petrie himself wrote:

The music of Ireland has hitherto been the exclusive property of the peasantry—the descendants of the ancient inhabitants of the country. The upper classes are a different race—a race who possess no national music; or, if any, one essentially different from that of Ireland. They are insensitive to its beauty, for it breathed not their feelings; and they resigned it to those from whom they took everything else, because it was a jewel of whose worth they were ignorant. He, therefore, who would add to the stock of Irish melody must seek it, not in the halls of the great, but in the cabins of the poor.⁴⁰

Of all the social classes in pre-Famine Ireland, few have received the same attention from music makers as the *spailpín*, or landless laborer. According to the Devon Commission, which was set up in November 1843, farm workers on the eve of the Famine could be divided into three categories: the unmarried farm servant living with his employer, the married laborer holding his own cabin and a small plot of land from a farmer at a fixed rent, and the *spailpín* holding nothing other than a cabin and obliged to hawk his labor wherever he found work. The latter survived largely on a system of conacre in the hope of growing enough crops to pay his rent and keep food on his table. Earning as little as eight pence to a shilling a day, the *spailpín*, the commissioners declared, belonged to the most “wretched of the many wretched classes in Ireland.” To supplement the taking of conacre in times of crisis, the *spailpín* was obliged to become a temporary migrant worker.⁴¹ This was particularly common among mountainy and bogland communities in the west of Ireland, from where the *spailpín* was dispatched to find work with “a strong farmer” along the riverine pastures of the Shannon and the fertile plains of Munster and Leinster. The scorned ritual of lining up to be “measured” at the “hiring fair” as hay making and potato digging beckoned from the nearby hinterland is well attested in the songs of the *spailpín*. Little had changed since the eighteenth-century Kerry poet described the contempt with which he was treated by the “big farmers” of Tipperary in the song “*An Spailpín Fánach*”:

Go deo deo arís ní raghaid go Caiseal Ag díol ná ag reic mo shláinte, Ná ar mhargadh na saoirse ina shuí cois balla I'm scaoinse ar leathtaoibh sráide—	I'll never again go to Cashel Selling and bartering my health, Nor at hiring fair sit down against a wall Nor hang about the street—
Bodairí na tíre ag tíocht ar a gcapaill	The boors of the district coming on their horses
Dá fhiafraí an bhfuilim hirálta. O ! téanamh chun siúil, tá an cúrsa fada; Seo ar siúl an spailpín fánach. ⁴²	Asking if I'm hired. O ! Start your walking, the journey is long It's off with the wandering laborer.

One of the primary victims of the Great Famine, the *spailpín* is also remembered in piping airs like “*Caoineadh an Spailpín*” (Lament for the *Spailpín*) and the song “*A Spailpín, A Rúin*” as well as in the Conamara song “*Peigín is Peadar*,” a versified form of a prose folk tale recounting the adventures of a *spailpín* who returns to his family after spending twenty-one years in service.⁴³

If the *spailpín* received his share of posterity from the musician and songwriter, so too did his main staple, the potato. According to tradition, the potato was introduced to Ireland by the Tudor adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh. Originating in the Andean Highlands of South America, the potato created agronomic conditions in Ireland in which a landless cottier class could survive by tilling land with no capital other than a spade and a *ciseán* or basket of seed potatoes. In the half century before the Famine, this class proliferated at an unprecedented rate in Ireland despite its location at 20 degrees latitude farther north of the equator than any other class of its kind.⁴⁴ The life-giving importance of the potato did not escape the attention of the folk poet and music maker on the eve of the Famine. Corroborating the maxim *Dá mbeadh fataí is móin againn, bheadh ár saol ar ár dtóin againn* (If we had potatoes and turf, we would have life on our rear ends), the musician, singer, and dancer extolled the potato and the rituals associated with its cultivation. Writing in Dublin in 1880, Sir William Wilde recalls his own memories of dancing in Roscommon, especially the dance of the “planting stick” — “*Maide na bPlanndaí*”:

There, the cake was generally fixed on the top of a churn-dish, which was set upright in the ground, and tied over with a clean cloth; and a fiddler and piper alternatively lilted up their jigs, reels and planxties to the tunes of the “Foxhunter’s Jig,” “Miss McLeod’s Reel,” the “*Batha Buidhe*” or

“Drive the Geese to the Bog”; while between the more general dancing some one would step forward and to the tune of “*Madah-na-plandie*,” “the planting stick,” imitate in pantomime dance the tilling, planting and digging of the potato.⁴⁵

A solo dance, “*Maide na bPlanndaí*” was danced to the air of the jig “Bryan O’Lynn.” Similarly, other jigs like “The Gander in the Pratie Hole” and “The Frost Is All Over” underline the extent to which potato rituals were acknowledged in the repertoire of the traditional musician. Singers too paid their homage to the potato, as the following stanza declares:

Ba iad ár gcaraid iad ó am ár gcliabháin	They were our friends from the cradle
Ach is é mo dhiobháil iad imeacht uainn	But their departure from us is my loss
Ba mhaith an chuideacht iad is an t-údar rince	They were good company, an excuse for dancing
Bhíodh spóirt is siamsa againn in aice leo. ⁴⁶	We had fun and entertainment with them.

If poverty and the potato conspired to keep the bulk of the population on the precarious brink of subsistence, the successive potato blights of 1845–48 brought the world of the *spailpín* and the *clachan* to ruination. With the onslaught of famine, disease, and panic-stricken emigration, the music maker too went the way of his audience—to the mass grave, the workhouse, and the coffin ship. In the resulting diaspora, his trade would find its way to the sidewalks of Brooklyn, the music halls of vaudeville, and the lace-curtain parlors of Irish America. It would also find its way to the street corners of Camden Town, the cotton mills of Lancashire, or succumb sadly to vagrancy on the crime-infested waterfront in Liverpool, where the immigrant businesses had become as vicious as the recently abolished slave trade. For the traditional musician who was lucky enough to survive, the dour silence of post-Famine Ireland would eventually make new demands on his folk art and impose new priorities on his cultural habitat.

Traditional Music and Song after the Famine

The degree to which these traumatic events are recounted in the traditional music of the period is selective but by no means sparse. While the titles of dance tunes recall nothing of the catastrophe, a small corpus of

songs in the Irish language bears poignant witness to the horrors of the tragedy in western rural areas. *Gaeltacht* songs like “Soup House Mhuigh-Iorrais” (from Connemara), “*An Droch-Shaoghal*” (from Uíbh Laoghaire, West Cork), and “*Amhrán na bPrátaí Dubha*” (from Ring, county Waterford) all voice the gruesome themes of hopelessness, disease, and deprivation from the internal perspective of suffering communities. Surprisingly few of these songs blame the political powers in Dublin or London explicitly for their misfortune. Neither do they chronicle the roles being played by the major political architects of the day—from Peel in the early years of the Famine to Trevelyan and Lord John Russell during the latter years. Any ire they exhibit is directed toward local landlords, bailiffs, proselytizers, corn dispensers, clerics, and Poor Law guardians. As well as indexing local fatalities, hunger, and emigration, the Irish songs also lament the lack of gaiety and courtship, music and matchmaking which clearly characterized the social life of rural communities before the Famine. A brief catalog of song themes and their related circumstances from south Connaught and west Munster will suffice to expose the wealth of local insights proffered by these folk scribes.

One of the last surviving Famine songs in the vernacular *sean nós* tradition of Connemara is “Johnny Seoighe,” which was collected by Séamus Ennis from Colm Ó Caoidheáin of Glinsce, Carna, in 1945. Composed possibly by local scribe Tomás Shiúnach (or one of his contemporaries, Brídín Ní Mháille or Mícheál Mharcuis Mac Con Iomaire), the song is a personal request by the poet to Johnny Seoighe, who was responsible for dispensing corn to Famine victims in Carna. The singer has been refused entry to the local workhouse and appeals directly to Seoighe for “relief” for his wife and child. The song opens with the singer’s optimistic appeal for charity. To strengthen his case, he eulogizes Seoighe and then implores God’s blessing on his quest for food.

Is tú bláth na hóige is gile lóchrann	You are the flower of youth, the whitest lantern
A dhearc mo shúil ó rugadh mé	That my eyes have seen since I was born
Is as ucht Chríost tabhair dom relief Nó go gcaitear ithe Nollaig féin ⁴⁷	In the name of Christ, give me relief For one must eat even at Christmas

In the second stanza, the starving singer pleads his case further. The reference to his “wife and child out under the dew” reinforces the feeling of

hunger and desperation, as well as an implicit sense of beholding to Seoighe, who now becomes a more respected “Mr. Joyce” in the remaining verses.

O lárnámháireach sea a fuair mé an páipéar	The following day I got the paper
Is nach mé bhí sásta is mé dhul chun siúil	And wasn't I happy starting my journey
Mar ní bhfuair mé freagra ar bith an lá sin	Because I had got no answer that day
Ach mo bhean is mo pháiste amuigh faoin drúcht	And my wife and my child out under the dew
Is a Mhister Joyce tá an workhouse lán	And Mr. Joyce, the workhouse is full
Is ní ghlacfar ann le haon fhear níos mó ⁴⁸	And they won't accept even one more man

Though the explicit message of the song appears to be clear and unambiguous, local folklore in Carna can read another more satirical message of deception and exploitation “between” the lines of “Johnny Seoighe.” Oral history recalls that Seoighe (Mr. Joyce) tried to unseat Seán Mac Donncha from his position as a distributor of relief tickets in Carna. Mac Donncha was regarded as an honest man. Joyce, on the other hand, was an “outsider” with a reputation for corruption. In the ensuing dispute, Joyce convinced his lady friend, Peg Barry (daughter of a bailiff on the local Martin estate), to swear false testimony against Mac Donncha in Roundstone Courthouse. Such intrigue may well explain the reluctance of singers in the Carna area to sing the song in public.

While most of the Famine songs in Irish were composed by anonymous folk poets, “*Na Fataí Bána*” (The White Potatoes) was written by Peatsaí Ó Callanáin (1791–1865), a comfortable farmer with twenty acres of land near Craughwell in east Galway. Recalling the widespread suffering and hardship of his less well-off neighbors, Ó Callanáin’s requiem recalls their traditional dependence on the potato. The first seven verses of his song eulogize the white potatoes and the sustenance they offered to young and old alike. It then focuses on the autumn blight of 1846, which he sees as an apocalyptic twist of fate, a heavenly sign that “the potatoes of the world” are rotting.

Nach é seo an scéal docharnach ag tíocht an Fhómhair	Isn't it a sad story now with the coming of autumn
---	---

An t-údar bróin dúinn agus briseadh croí	The cause of our sorrow and heartbreak
An bheatha a chleachtamar i dtús ár n-óige	The life that we led at the start of our youth
Bheith lofa dreoite gan mhaith gan bhrí	Rotten and empty without worth or meaning
Míle bliain agus ocht de chéadta	It's a thousand and eight hundred years
Dhá fhichead gan bhréig is sé ina cheann	Forty and six years no lie
Ó thuirling an Slánaitheoir i gcolainn daonna	Since our Savior descended in human form
Go dtáinig léanscrios ar fhataí an domhain ⁴⁹	Until the potatoes of the world rotted

Ó Callanáin states pessimistically that the poorhouse and the hospital are full. Bodies are now being buried on boards, and those who survive are eating *min bhuí* (yellow meal) twice daily. Complaint follows complaint throughout the closing stanzas. He is particularly critical of the poor wages given to those who work on the public work schemes, which are most ineffective in countering the hopelessness of the countryside. In the following two stanzas, he contrasts the flagrant indifference of the rich, whose tables are laden down with food and drink, with the helplessness of the hungry poor who no longer have the will to live.

Gan ór gan airgead, gan chreidiúint shaolta	Without gold or silver, without belief in life
Gan tnúth le tréan againn ach amháin le Dia	With no expectation of survival; longing for God
Ach muintir Shasana ag tabhairt pái lae dhúinn	But the people of England giving us a day's pay
Dhá bhonn ar éigin gan deoch gan bia	Barely two coins without drink nor food
Tá daoine uaisle i mbuaic an tsaoil seo	There are noble people at the pinnacle of life
Tá puins is, fion acu dá n-ól ar chlár	Drinking punch and wine from their table
Tá feoil dá halpadh acu go méirleach craosach	Devouring meat with gluttonous spite
Gan trua ná daonnacht do fhear an chaill ⁵⁰	Without pity or charity for the man of need

A graphic folk recollection of the Famine on the Dingle Peninsula, “*Amhrán an Ghorta*,” is a penetrating appraisal of the tragedy in an area that suffered huge population depletion. According to local tradition, the song was composed by an anonymous female—possibly from Baile na nGall. Her song echoes Ó Callanáin’s account of hunger and crop failure in south Connaught. As well as issuing a scathing attack on the local Poor Law guardians “*a bhí os cionn súip, is ná roinnfeadh é*” (who were in charge of the soup and did not distribute it), she laments the lack of gaiety, courtship, and music making which the hunger precipitated. Her observations were to prove astute and long-term.

Tá scamall éigin os cionn na hÉireann	There is some (dark) cloud over Ireland
Nár fhan dúil i gcéiliocht ag fear ná ag mnaoi;	Men and women desire no courtship;
Ní athníonn éinne des na daoine a chéile,	The people do not recognize each other,
Is tá an suan céanna ar gach uile ní.	And the same lull has befallen everything.
Ní miste spéirbhean bheith amuigh go déanach	An enchanted lady does not mind staying out late
Níor fhan aon tréine ins na fir a bhí,	With no strength left in the men that were,
Níl ceol in aon áit ná suim ina dhéanamh	There’s no music anywhere nor a desire to make it
Is ní aithním glao cheart ag bean chun bídh ⁵¹	And I hear no clear call to food from any woman

There is little doubt that the Great Famine marked a radical watershed in the history of Irish traditional music. In its wake, the Irish-speaking habitat of the musician was changed irrevocably. The former intimacy of the *clachan* and the townland was virtually erased, and in its place lay a materialistic world of profit economics and conservative social mores. In the resulting upheaval, archaic traditions like work songs and fairy laments, potato dances and *rogairne* gatherings, which were popular before the cataclysm, were gradually abandoned. Conversely, political ballads and emigrant songs, which were once peripheral, now became commonplace. In the west of Ireland, the accelerated transition from Irish to English as a song medium eroded further the *gemeinschaft* mindset of the *clachan*. Likewise, popular superstitions and folk beliefs associated with

music, and especially songs in the Irish language, failed to translate into narrow-gauge English.

New songs in English were introduced from a broader *gesellschaft* exterior and they in turn interpreted the Famine in a manner that was different from the insights proffered by folk poets in Irish-speaking western communities. Some were nationalist ballads that viewed the famine as a callous act of British imperialism; others were songs of emigration that recalled the catastrophe in the midst of exile and loneliness. The nationalism of the Young Irelanders and the separatism of the Fenians both found their voices in the popular English ballads of the post-Famine period. In urban America, the songs of the Young Irelanders helped to retrospectively politicize the Famine in the immigrant mindset, while in Ireland the Fenian poets drew heavily on the emergent theme of Famine genocide to justify their separatist agenda. This retrospective politicization eventually found its way into local Famine songs which were written in English years after the events they describe. The Clare song "Lone Shanakyle" is a case in point. In focusing on the appalling reality of crowded workhouses, cartloads of uncoffined bodies, and quick-lime burials, the exiled Kilrush poet Thomas Madigan (1797–1881) laced his message of loneliness with a compelling series of nationalist metaphors. His song of exile is also a powerful political requiem to the 3,900 people who died in the workhouse in Kilrush in the years 1847–49, and who were buried in a mass grave in Shanakyle outside the town on the lower Shannon.

Far, far from the isle of the holy and grand
Where wild oxen fatten and brave men are banned
All lonely and lone in a far distant land
Do I wander and pine for poor Érin.

Sad, sad is my fate in this weary exile,
Dark, dark is the night cloud o'er lone Shanakyle
Where the murdered sleep silently, pile upon pile
In the coffinless graves of poor Érin.⁵²

Regardless of Madigan's political intentions, his potent images of hunger and human suffering are well confirmed in the contemporary Poor Law reports of Captain Kennedy, who inspected the region between mid-November and late December 1847. Writing to the commissioners in Dublin on November 18, he said:

The admissions to the workhouse amounted to 200 in the past week. Such a tangled mess of poverty, filth and disease as the applicants presented, I have never seen. Numbers in all stages of fever and small pox mingled indiscriminately with the crowd and all clamoring for admissions. . . . Paper could not convey a description of the horrors and misery concentrated among two hundred persons.⁵³

The Famine years were marked by a vigorous proselytism that was orchestrated by colonies of Protestant evangelists throughout the west of Ireland. The promise of soup and the hope of survival drove many a starving convert to abandon one form of Christianity for another. For “soupers” or “jumpers” who survived the Famine, the stigma of their conversion would haunt them and their families for generations. Few were given the benefit of their newfound convictions, at least by the folk scribes of the day. Writing on the social consequences of proselytism during the famine in county Mayo, Corduff points out that the satirist Michael McGrath in Erris

composed a number of songs condemning the Protestant religion, its founders, its apostate disciples who roamed the county making Catholic “perverts,” and the “jumpers” of the time who deserted the Church. There is no doubt whatever, that these songs were sung out at festive gatherings and were in themselves a powerful influence in preserving the religious status quo in Erris.⁵⁴

Other conversions to Protestantism were hastened by the zealotry of some clerics who regarded the catastrophe as a cue to purge the countryside of its incumbent sinners. The synods of Thurles and Maynooth (organized by the Catholic hierarchy in 1850 and 1875) unleashed a liturgical revolution which was to have a profound impact on post-Famine Ireland.⁵⁵ Henceforth, the role of the priest as social arbiter and moral policeman became sacrosanct—especially in rural areas where spontaneous communal entertainment had been the norm. Hunting the countryside for courting couples and purging fiddlers from crossroad dances, some priests conducted their own personal crusades against traditional musicians, who were seen as instigators of immoral pastimes in the post-Famine decades. Not all of these crusades, however, had the desired effect of quelling the enthusiasm of traditional performers. Tom Kennedy, the blind piper who gave the collector Canon James Goodman several hundred tunes in the 1850s, turned Protestant “and joined the souper colony

at Ventry" on the Dingle Peninsula after being continually harassed by Fr. John Casey, parish priest of Feriter.⁵⁶ In referring to this episode, musicologist Breandán Breathnach posits that:

A pathetic story current in folklore must relate to this incident. When Bishop Egan came to confirm children in the parish, an old infirm piper stationed himself on the road between the chapel and the priest's home, knowing that after the confirmation the bishop retired there for dinner. The lame piper stood in the road on the approach of the bishop and asked his permission to play at dances and gatherings, declaring that he had not the use of his limbs nor any other means but his pipes to earn the bit to put in his mouth. The boorish and unfeeling reply was "O, Father John must know what the position is and what suits."⁵⁷

Father Casey's zeal for cleansing his parish of pipers is explicitly recounted in the diaries of Archdeacon John O'Sullivan, the former's colleague in Dingle. Describing a christening where Casey had to contend with a piper from an "outside parish," O'Sullivan says:

The young people should have a dance and they had taken care before dinner to send to Dingle parish for a piper on the bounds of which one lived who would now and then make incursion into Casey's territory in spite of him. The piper, evidently in bodily fear of Casey, was induced to strike up, and jigs and reels and country dances were carried on with great vigor . . . the mirth and humor began to increase when Doctors Hickson and Fagan got up on a table to dance a jig on it, at which the shouting and cheering and laughing rose beyond all bounds so much so as completely to bother and confuse old Casey who was baptizing the child in the kitchen. He ran out in a fury with his stole on him and when he saw the two Doctors on the table, his whole parish again gathered about and beholding the profanation, his anger knew no bounds; he rushed over, laid hold of the innocent but unfortunate piper, kicked, cuffed and beat him unmercifully, broke his pipes and completely dispersed the whole assembly.⁵⁸

While some musicians like piper Tom Kennedy found refuge inside coercive "souper" colonies, the Famine cleansed the countryside of thousands of others who were not as lucky or as morally supple. Workhouse records—especially in the midwestern counties of Galway and Clare—attest to the death of pipers within their dour precincts, while the field notes of collectors like George Petrie reference the passing of some of his primary musical informants.⁵⁹

The Famine also spelled disaster for a thriving corps of instrument

makers who served their needs. In the years prior to the Famine, flutes, fiddles, and uilleann pipes were often made by local blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and carpenters who turned their hand to instrument making to supplement their crafts. The Moloney Brothers, who ran a forge at Knockera, near Kilrush on the Iorris peninsula in southwest Clare, catered for this dual marketplace in the 1830s. The saga of their "bankruptcy" is a classic case of such economic failure at townland level. Both were prosperous artisans in the pre-Famine era and folklore still recalls how they were beguiled by the duplicity of the Vandaleurs, the local landlords whose enthusiasm for mass evictions was in a class of its own. Writing about their fall from prosperity in the post-Famine years, Captain Francis O'Neill says:

Thomas and Andrew Maloney . . . Made on the order of Mr. Vandaleur, a local landlord, what is claimed to be the most elaborate sets of bagpipes in existence. Thomas was a blacksmith and Andrew was a carpenter, but both were great performers on the Union pipes. . . . As the young man (Vandaleur) for whom the instrument was intended met with an injury, it remained on their hands, unsalable because of its expensiveness. The disastrous famine years ruined the Moloneys and they were obliged to part with their masterpiece for a trifling sum.⁶⁰

Despite the failure of the Moloney business, one set of their pipes eventually found its way to New York in the 1860s with a Clare piper who made his career in vaudeville. In the interim between the initial coffin ship exodus and the American Civil War, thousands of Irish traditional musicians found their way across the North Atlantic. Some settled in the immediate vicinity of Quebec and contributed in turn to its musical traditions.⁶¹ Others crossed the border into the United States. In this strange foreign nexus of crowded ghettos and rampant opportunism, their folk art found new outlets in a melting pot of urban entertainment and aggressive social mobility. The archaic music making of the *clachan* had now become a commodity in a brave new transatlantic world.

Mindful of the cultural cleansing effects of the Famine in Ireland, collector George Petrie reflected on the depressed state of his informants in the 1850s. His despair is matched by an urgency to collect what remained of the music of Gaelic Ireland.

"The land of song" was no longer tuneful; or, if a human sound met the traveler's ear, it was only that of the feeble and despairing wail for the dead.

This awful un wonted silence, which, during the famine and subsequent years, almost everywhere prevailed, struck more fearfully upon their imaginations . . . and I confess that it was a consideration of the circumstances of which this fact gave so striking an indication, that . . . influenced me in coming to a determination to accept the proposal of the Irish-Music Society.⁶²

Petrie's observations are corroborated by Séamus Dubh Ó Fiannachta, editor of the songs of Tomás Ruaidh Ó Súilleabháin (1785–1848), a Kerry poet and fiddler who lived through the worst excesses of the tragedy in Cahirciveen. Reflecting on the silence of the song tradition after the famine, Séamus Dubh laments that “the awful visitation of the Famine . . . rendering the land sad and songless, effected a distinct psychological change in the Irish character.”⁶³ Similarly, the biographers of Father Dinneen (one of the principal figures of the Irish language movement in the late nineteenth century), noting “that the people of *Sliabh Luachra* were not half as musical in the second half of the century as in the first, explained, *bhí an teaspach bainte díobh ag amhgar agus ag drochshaol*”—the spirit had been taken out of them by want and famine.⁶⁴

One of the most blatant indicators of the silencing effects of the Famine on the song tradition is evidenced in the decline of work songs during the 1850s. With the radical shift in land use and the focused capitalization of Irish agriculture, tillage gave way to increased pasture, which was less labor intensive. Consequently, Irish songs associated with plowing, reaping, and sowing, as well as their related domestic chores, were deprived of the activities that sustained them. Writing about “*The Ploughman's Whistle*” in 1855, George Petrie pointed out that “such airs are now rarely or never to be heard” because of “the consequences of the calamities of recent years.” His observation is corroborated by P. W. Joyce, who posited that the Famine period was a *terminus ante quem* for the use of popular work songs like “*Loinneóg Oireamh*,” “*Aéire Cinn Bó Rúin*,” “*Crónán na mBó*,” “*An Sealbhán Seó*,” and others in a countryside that was once the preserve of widespread communal farming.⁶⁵

In the west of Ireland, where the hemorrhage of emigration became the norm after the Famine, the topography of traditional music making was changed irrevocably. The widespread destruction of *clachan* communities deprived traveling pipers and dancing masters of their patrons. Similarly, the collective sense of time and space that characterized this domain was changed inexorably. The new anglicized place-names of

post-Famine Ireland grafted ill-fitting spatial parameters onto an older world of townlands, rundale strips, and “walking” distances. The decline of the Irish language deprived the dance music of its former cultural geography as the *seanchas* and *dinnsheanchas*—folklore and place-name lore—associated with tunes failed to translate into utilitarian English.

In the bleak uplands along the Atlantic seaboard, where scattered remnants of the *clachan* mentality persisted, many traditional musicians continued to find listeners and dancers despite the moral policing of the clergy, the cultural indifference of their educational system, and the high art predilections of their urban neighbors. Occasions of music making in this archaic milieu still followed the cooperative work cycle of the *meitheal* and the ritual gatherings of the agricultural year. Inherent within this cultural calendar, however, was an ongoing *via dolorosa* of “American Wakes” where departing emigrants were fêted by neighbors and musicians. As long as these “wakes” persisted in rupturing the very fabric of Irish family life, the unquiet ghost of the Great Famine would continue to haunt the communal psyche of rural Ireland and impact the musical culture of its people at home and abroad.

Notes

1. See Cormac Ó Gráda, *An Drochshaol: Béaloideas agus Amhráin* (Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 1994); Cathal Póirtéir, “Folk Memory and the Famine,” in *The Great Famine: The Thomas Davis Lecture Series*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Cork: Mercier Press, 1995); and Chris Morash, *The Hungry Voice: The Poetry of the Irish Famine* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989).

2. Robert James Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine and Emigration* (New York: Oxford, 1995); Kevin Whelan, “Pre and Post-Famine Landscape Changes,” in Póirtéir, *The Great Famine*; Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland before and after the Famine* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); and Joan Vincent, “A Political Orchestration of the Irish Famine: County Fermanagh, May 1847,” in *Approaching the Past: Historical Anthropology through Irish Case Studies*, ed. Marilyn Silverman and P. H. Gulliver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

3. Captain Francis O’Neill, *Irish Folk Music: A Fascinating Hobby* (Chicago: Regan, 1910), 274.

4. George Petrie, in Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, ed., *The Complete Petrie Collection of Irish Music* (London, 1902–5), vol. 1, xii.

5. Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, “The Concertina in the Traditional Music of Clare” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Queen’s University of Belfast, 1990).

6. T. W. Freeman, “Land and People, c. 1841,” in *A New History of Ireland V*:

Ireland under the Union, 1:1801-70 ed. W. E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 242-85. See also Thomas Flanagan, "Literature in English, 1801-91" in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland V*, 482-522.

7. Breandán Breathnach, *Folkmusic and Dances of Ireland* (Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland, 1971), 108-24. See also Janet Harbison, "The Legacy of the Belfast Harpers' Festival," *Ulster Folklife* 35 (1989): 113-28.

8. Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, *Ireland: Its Scenery, Character etc.* (London: Hall and Virtue, 1841-43), vol. 3, 421-27. The Halls' account is accompanied by an artist's impression of a rather plump and smiling Rory Oge sitting with his back to an enormous keg of whiskey.

9. *Ibid.*, 422.

10. Capo de Feuillide, *l'Irlande*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1839). See also Marie-Hélène Pauly, *Les Voyageurs Français en Irlande au Temps du Romantisme*, thèse pour le Doctorat d'Université (Université de Paris: Faculté des Lettres, 1939).

11. "As for the people, they know nothing of Thomas Moore." De Feuillide, *l'Irlande*, 356.

12. "de n'être qu'un ignorant" (for being such an ignorant man); de Feuillide, *l'Irlande*, 399.

13. The term *sean nós* is used today to describe traditional songs that are sung in the Irish language. It was first used during the early years of the Gaelic League's *Oireachtas*. Still prevalent among Irish-speaking *Gaeltacht* communities in the west of Ireland, these melodies are primarily modal in character and belong to a literary tradition of folk poetry that dates ostensibly from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

14. "In the language of the country, the poet and the musician are synonymous, the word 'bard' signifies one and the other." De Feuillide, *l'Irlande*, 375.

15. Caoimhghin Ó Góilidhe, *Díolaim Filíochta* (Baile Átha Cliath: Folens, 1974), 191-92.

16. Conelly was immortalized by Petrie in the *Irish Penny Journal* in 1840. See Captain Francis O' Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (Chicago: Regan, 1913), 212-15. See also Grace J. Calder, *George Petrie and "The Ancient Music of Ireland"* (Dublin: Dolmen, 1968).

17. Breandán Breathnach, *Dancing in Ireland* (Miltown Malbay: Dal gCais, 1983), 28.

18. Seán Donnelly, "Maurice Lenihan's account of some eighteenth and nineteenth century dancing masters," *Ceol na hÉireann: Irish Music* 1 (1993): 75-81. The reference to "cakes" in this extract recalls the custom of dancing for a cake. See also Seán Ó Dubhda, "The Cake Dance," *Béaloidéas* 11 (1941): 126-42.

19. Many of the agricultural rituals originally associated with Bealtaine were shifted to St. John's Eve, which was celebrated on June 24, the longest day of the year. These included driving cattle through bonfires to protect them from disease and miscarriage. See Miller, *Emigrants*, 73.

20. Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75," *American Historical Review* 77 (1972): 625-52.

21. David Thomson and Moyra McGusty, *The Irish Journals of Elizabeth Smith*

1840–1850 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 25. This archaic custom still continues throughout the west of Ireland. It has been referenced among Irish communities in places as diverse as the outports of Newfoundland as well as among Irish communities in California and Australia.

22. O' Neill, *Irish Minstrels*, 153.

23. Still used in the rural vernacular of Clare, south Galway, and north Kerry, the term *swaree* (lit. *soirée*) is a remnant of the gallicized vocabulary of pre-Famine dancing masters.

24. Breathnach, *Folkmusic*, 23.

25. *Ibid.*, 24. It is apparent, however, that many political songs in Irish were edited out of the collections (or were simply not considered worthy of collection) in the 1830s and 1840s. These included a number of supposedly Whiteboy ballads like “Ó' Bhean an Tighe nach suairc é sin,” which Petrie collected from Tadhg Mac Mathúna on the Iorrus Peninsula. Its explicitly “seditious” radicalism proved “too much” for Petrie and, as such, was dismissed as having little “poetic merit.”

26. Eugene O'Curry, *Of the manners and customs of the ancient Irish*, (3 vols. London and Dublin, 1873), vol. 3, 392. See also Breathnach, *Folkmusic*, 26. Although O'Curry speaks of the *laoi* being on the verge of extinction in the decades after the famine, two sung versions of “*Laoi na Mná Móire*” were recorded from Mícheál and Séamus Ó hIghne from Glencolmcille, co. Donegal, in the 1940s. Reminiscent of Latin plain chant, many *laoithe* were recorded from older singers in the Hebrides as late as the 1970s.

27. Among their more celebrated fairy songs collected in southwest Clare is “*A Bhean Úd Thíos*.” It codifies the duties of a distraught husband who wants to rescue his wife from the fairies. See Hugh Shields, *Narrative Singing in Ireland: Lays, Ballads, Come-All-Yes and Other Songs* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), 95.

28. Irish-speaking *Gaeltacht* communities are still vibrant near Dungarvan, co. Waterford (namely An Rinn) and Galway (Connemara). The Iorrus Peninsula to the west of Kilrush in southwest Clare is no longer regarded as a *Gaeltacht* area.

29. Irish tattie hookers (potato diggers) and bothy bands (groups of itinerant migrant workers) were commonplace in the rich tillage lands of Lowland Scotland during the past century and a half. Offering seasonal employment to landless laborers and marginal occupants of conacre holdings, this movement of workers attracted “recruits” mainly from the barren uplands of Ulster and north Connaught.

30. Breathnach, *Folkmusic*, 31.

31. Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, *Field Day Monographs 4* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 174. See also Liam de Paor, “Tom Moore and Contemporary Ireland,” *Leácht Chomórtha an Riadaigh 4* (Cork: Irish Traditional Music Society, University College, Cork, 1989), 11.

32. While his romantic paraphernalia of shamrocks and harps helped to formulate a mythology of Irish nationalism in the early nineteenth century, Moore's own performances were criticized by many of his contemporaries. William Hazlitt, for instance, regarded Moore's pseudo-tradition as an attempt to convert “the

wild harp of Érin into a musical snuff-box." See Frank Llewelyn Harrison, "Irish Traditional Music: Fossil or Resource," *Léacht Chomórtha an Riadaigh* 3 (Cork: Irish Traditional Music Society, University College, Cork, 1988), 17; Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, 59; and de Paor, "Tom Moore and Contemporary Ireland," 7.

33. The chroniclers of *The Nation* were not without their scorn, however, for the "rude simplicity of the songs composed by peasants of little education for peasants of still less." As Breathnach (*Folkmusic*, 32–32) quite rightly affirmed, these "rural folk-songs proved more acceptable and enduring than the literary artifice of the Young Ireland writers" in the long term.

34. Shields, *Narrative Singing*, 139.

35. E. Estyn Evans, *Irish Heritage: The Landscape, the People and Their Work* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1949).

36. Robert James Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine and Emigration* (New York: Oxford, 1995), 9–10.

37. Whelan, "Landscape Changes," 23–33. See also F. H. A. Aalen, *Man and the Landscape in Ireland* (London: Academic Press, 1978), 220–23.

38. Evans, *Irish Heritage*, 47–57.

39. Whelan, "Landscape Changes," 24.

40. Calder, *George Petrie*, 38–39.

41. John W. Boyle, "A Marginal Figure: The Irish Rural Laborer," in *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest 1780–1914*, ed. Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 313–14. According to Connemara tradition, the word *spailpín* is derived from the Irish *speal* or 'scythe.'

42. Pádraig Ó Cannainn, ed., *Filíocht na nGael* (Dublin, 1958), 161. See also Boyle, "A Marginal Figure," 314.

43. Joe Heaney, *Irish Traditional Songs in Gaelic and English* (Cork: Ossian, 1989), notes by A. L. Lloyd.

44. Raymond Crotty, *Ireland in Crisis: A Case Study in Capitalist Colonial Underdevelopment*, (Dublin: 1986), 42. Crotty refers to these *clachan*-based cottiers and *spailpíns* as "a coolie class."

45. Sir William Wilde, *Memoir of Gabriel Beranger* (Dublin, 1880), 40. See also Breathnach, *Dancing*, 26.

46. Peatsaí Ó Callanáin, "Na Fataí Bána," cited in Ó Gráda, *An Drochshaol*, 50–53.

47. Ó Gráda, *An Drochshaol*, 54.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Ó Callanáin, cited in *ibid.*, 50–51.

50. *Ibid.*, 51.

51. Ó Gráda, *An Drochshaol*, 73.

52. Séamus Mac Mathúna, *Traditional Songs and Singers* (Baile Átha Cliath: Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, 1977), 22–23. This song was recorded from eighty-four-year-old Michéy Flanagan of Inagh, co. Clare, in 1974. Sung to the air of an older song, "An Páistín Fionn," it was probably written during the early 1860s in anticipation of the Fenian Rising, judging by its political agenda.

53. *British Parliamentary Papers: Famine Ireland*, vol. 2, 726. See also Michael MacMahon, "The Great Famine in Clare: Gleanings from the Parliamentary Papers," *Dal gCais* 5 (1979): 89–93.

54. Irish Folklore Collections, Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin, 1245: 482–83. Cited in Breandán Ó Madagáin, "Functions of Irish Song in the Nineteenth Century," *Béaloideas* (1985): 167.

55. See Larkin, "Devotional Revolution," 625–52. See also his "Economic Growth, Capital Investment and the Roman Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," *American Historical Review* 72 (1967): 852–84.

56. Breathnach, *Dancing*, 40.

57. Breandán Breathnach, "Séamus Goodman (1828–96): Bailtheoir Ceoil," *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society* 6 (1973): 159–60.

58. Pádraig de Brún, "John Windale and Father Casey," *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society* 7 (1974): 83–84.

59. Recounting the life of piper John McDonough of Annaghdown, co. Galway, Captain Francis O' Neill suggests:

To no class in the community did the terrible famine years prove more disastrous than to the pipers. Those who lived through plague and privation found but scanty patronage thereafter. "The pipers are gone out of fashion," as one of them ruefully expressed it, so poor John McDonough, the peerless piper, finding himself crushed between poverty and decrepitude, took sick on his way back to his native Galway and died neglected and ignored in the Gort workhouse.

See O' Neill, *Irish Minstrels*, 208–9.

60. O' Neill, *Irish Minstrels*, 157–58. This rare set of uilleann pipes with its unique trombone slide, five regulators, and twenty-four keys is housed today in the National Museum of Ireland. Its original cost was estimated at \$500 in the early 1840s.

61. See Carmelle Bégin, "La musique traditionnelle pour violon: Jean Carrignan" (thèse de Ph.D. musique, Université de Montréal, 1979). This thesis on the music of legendary Québécois fiddler Ti-Jean Carrignan indicates a correlation between his repertoire and an older core of Irish dance tunes. Robert Grace's seminal work, *The Irish in Québec: An Introduction to the Historiography* (Québec: Institut Québécois de Recherche sur la Culture, 1993) previews the research potential of this field.

62. George Petrie, in Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, ed., *The Complete Petrie Collection of Irish Music* (London, 1902–5), vol. 1, xii.

63. Séamus Dubh [O Fiannachta], *The Songs of Tomás Ruaidh O'Sullivan* (Dublin, 1914), 22. Cited in Ó Madagáin, "Functions of Irish Song," 197.

64. Proinsias Ó Conluain agus D. Ó Céilleachair, *An Duinníneach* (Dublin, 1958), 58.

65. The only documented example of an Irish language ploughing song is "Loinneóg Oireamh" (The Ploughman's Lilt). It was collected by George Petrie

from ploughman Tadhg McMahon in southwest Clare in the 1840s. It no longer survives in the vernacular tradition. “*Aéire Cinn Bó Rúin*” (The Herd of the Pet Cow) and “*An Sealbhán Seó*” (The Precious Treasure) were both weaving dialogues sung by women during *comhar* (cooperative) work sessions. The milking song “*Crónán na mBó*” was given to Petrie by Frank Keane, a Dublin law clerk who was born in Kilfearagh, co. Clare. Its use of vocables in the refrain suggests a magical incantation. The singing of charms to protect milk, young married women, mothers, and infants was a common feature of secular rituals and superstitions before the Famine. This folk tradition did not survive the liturgical revolution in post-Famine Catholicism. See Donal O’Sullivan, *Songs of the Irish* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1981), 32–38; and Ó Madagáin, “Functions of Irish Song,” 207–10.